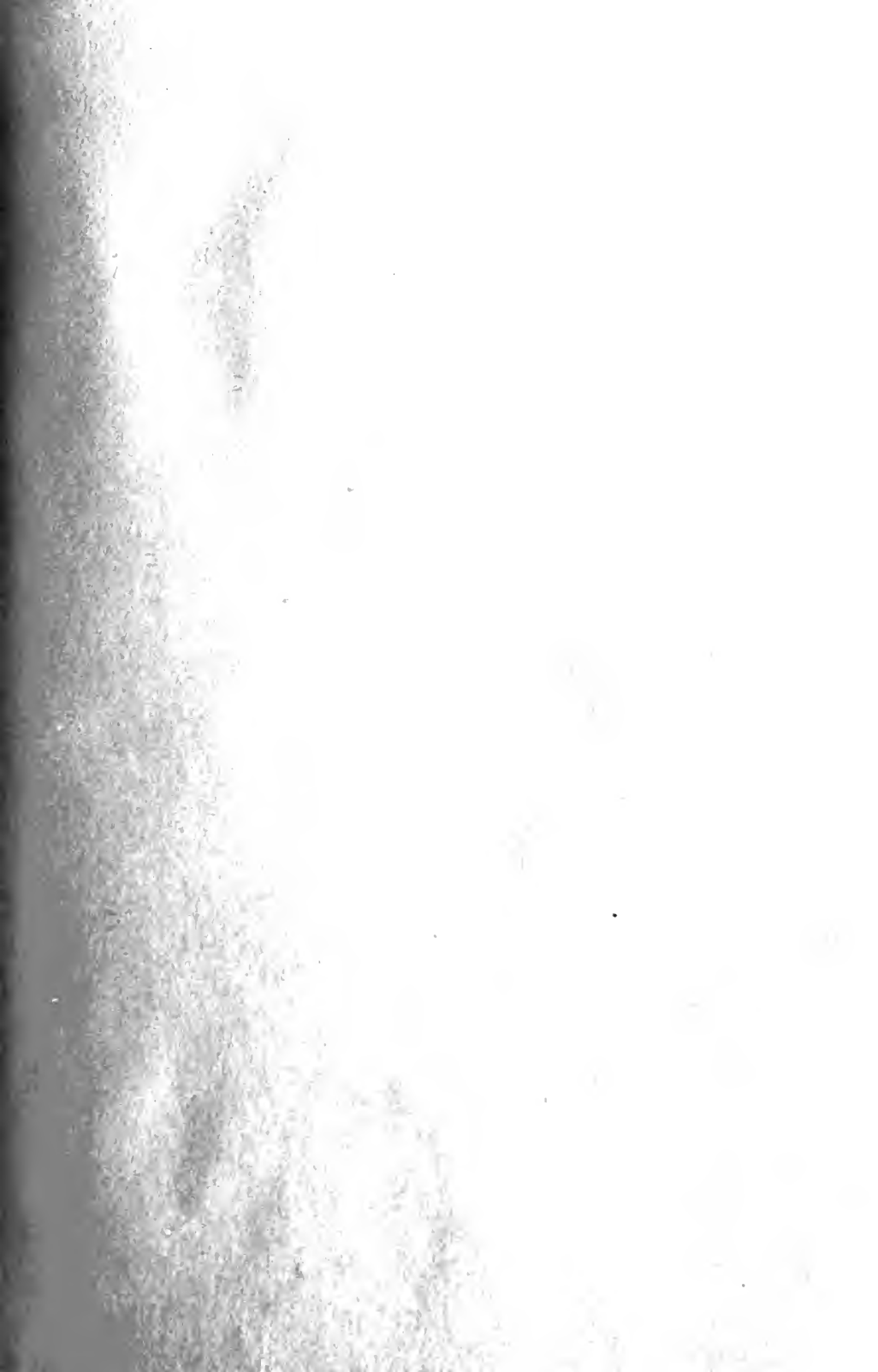


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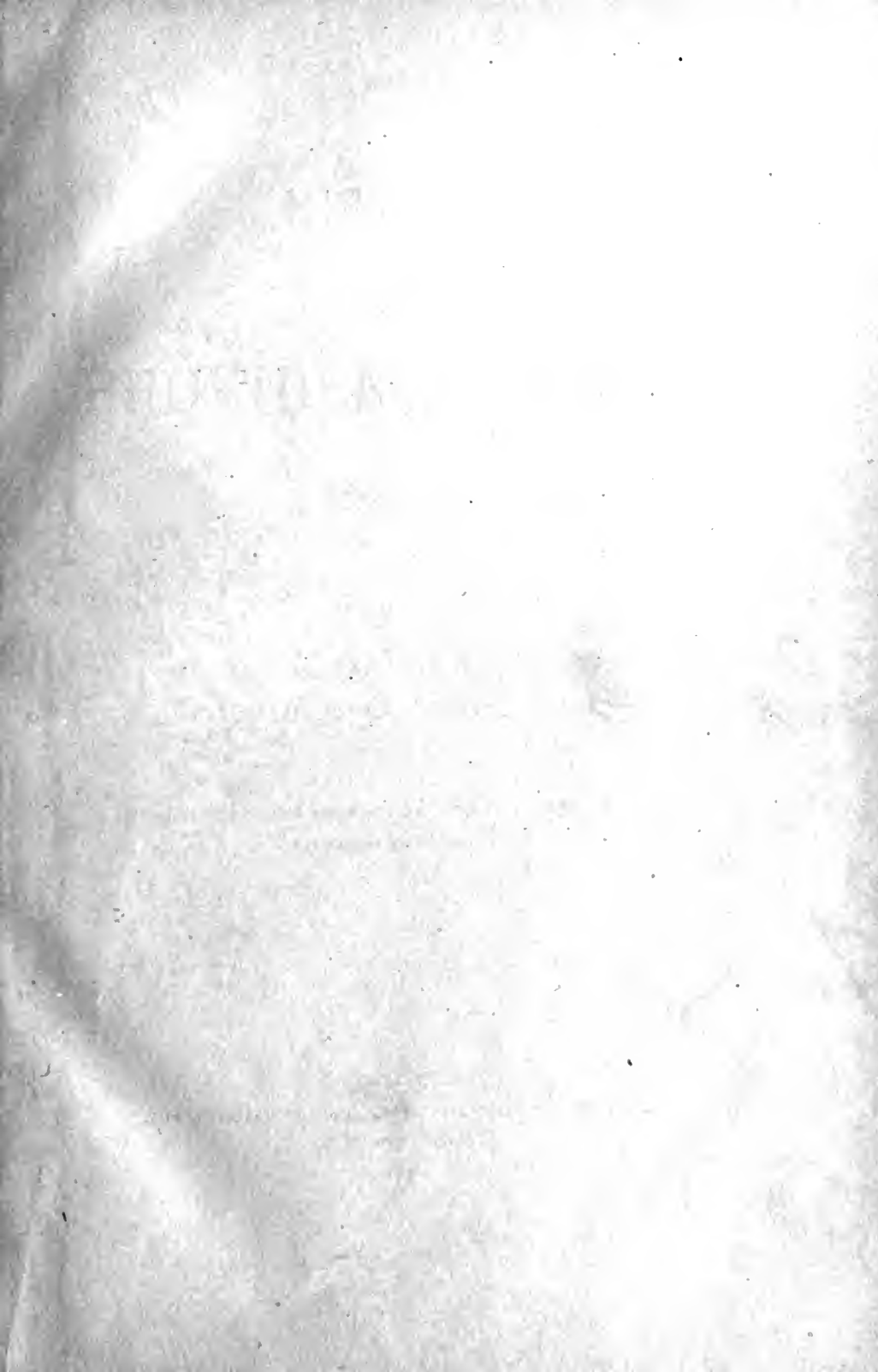


Col. Isaac L. Goff

Compliments of the Author

Geo. C. Willard.







HISTORY  
OF THE  
PROVIDENCE STAGE,  
1762-1891.

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BY  
GEORGE O. WILLARD,

INCLUDING SKETCHES OF MANY PROMINENT ACTORS WHO HAVE  
APPEARED IN AMERICA.

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PROVIDENCE:  
THE RHODE ISLAND NEWS COMPANY,  
PUBLISHER'S AGENT.  
1891.

Respectfully Dedicated to my Friend,  
MR. CHARLES BLAKE,  
Author of First History of Providence Stage.

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SNOW & FARNHAM, PRINTERS.

## PREFACE.

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THE author has taken such an interest in theatrical matters, that for many years he has kept almost a complete record of plays and players in Providence. He has often been asked to write a history of the Providence stage, but has not found time to devote to such a work until recently. In 1868, Mr. Charles Blake, Clerk of the Supreme Court, published such a history, bringing the record up to the latter part of 1859. Obtaining the consent of Mr. Blake to embody his history in this work, the writer has added several sketches of prominent stars to the former, and has continued the record up to the present year. Mr. Blake's work made the latter a comparatively easy task, although a search of old files of newspapers for more than thirty years was necessary to obtain criticisms, accounts of prominent events, etc.

The writer is greatly indebted to Brown's *History of the American Stage*, Phelps's *Players of a Century*, and that excellent work recently published in Philadelphia by Gebbie & Co., entitled *Stage and its Stars, Past and Present*, for various matters of interest, together with sketches, etc., of prominent stars.

GEO. O. WILLARD.





## CHAPTER I.

1745-1761.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAMA INTO THE WEST INDIES BY MOODY—AMATEURS IN PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK—WILLIAM AND LEWIS HALLAM SEND A COMPANY OF ACTORS TO YORKTOWN—HOSTILITY TO THEATRES IN THE NORTHERN COLONIES—THE VIRGINIA COMEDIANS PLAY IN NEWPORT IN 1761—CHARITY BENEFITS—MORAL DIALOGUES—A CURIOUS PLAY-BILL—SKETCHES OF THE PERFORMERS—DOUGLASS—HALLAM—MORRIS.

THE founder of the American Stage was Moody, of Drury Lane, a man who in early life had been a barber, but who, having a taste for the drama, subsequently attempted the histrionic profession. He was naturally a comedian, and was somewhat distinguished for his personation of Irish characters, but he aspired to play the heroes of tragedy, and, as he was unable to attain the accomplishment of his desires at home, he resolved to try his fortunes in the New World. Accordingly he set sail, and reached the island of Jamaica about the year 1745. There he found an amateur company playing in a ball-room, and, offering his services, he proved so superior to any actor the planters had seen, that he achieved a signal success. His popularity was so great that he was induced to propose to them the opening of a regular theatre with a company which he offered to bring out from England. This offer met with the warmest approval; a subscription was set on foot, and he returned home for recruits, with whom he made his appearance the following winter, when he opened with due dignity the first temple of Thespis that was reared in the colonies.

He prospered so well in his enterprise that in a few years he amassed a considerable fortune, when he was obliged to return to England to make fresh engagements. An offer was made him by Mr. Garrick to enlist at Drury Lane, and, accepting this offer, he transferred the expedition to the com-

pany which he had raised, the chief members of which were Messrs. Douglass, Kershaw, Smith, Daniels, and Morris, with their wives, and a Miss Hamilton, who was their principal actress. They reached Jamaica about 1751, and succeeded not only to Moody's rights, but to his gains.<sup>1</sup>

In 1749 a theatrical company was playing in Philadelphia, and on the police records of that city, bearing date January 8, 1749, it is written that the Recorder acquainted the Board with some facts concerning certain persons who had lately taken upon themselves to act play acts, etc. In 1750 this same company went to New York, and played in a wooden building in Nassau street which they had hastily converted into a theatre capable of seating about three hundred persons. They then went to Williamsburg, Va., and, under the Presidency of Thomas Lee, the "Philadelphia and New York Company of Comedians," as they were called, obtained permission to erect a theatre in Williamsburg, which was begun and finished in the year 1750. This company consisted of amateur performers, assisted by one or two actors, who had straggled from the British West India Islands,<sup>2</sup> probably from Moody's company.

Theatrical performances of some kind had taken place in New York as early as 1733, but there is no information touching the names, number, or quality of the performers, the only evidence of their existence being an advertisement in Bradford's *Gazette* of that year, by which a tradesman calls public attention to his place of business "next door to the Play-House."<sup>3</sup> It is not probable that this place was the scene of any professional acting.

The tidings of the good fortune of the Jamaica comedians were borne to London, and occasioned the organization of a similar expedition, designed for the Continental colonies. William Hallam, who had succeeded Giffard in the management of Goodman's Fields Theatre, when Giffard and Garrick had been invited to Drury Lane, first conceived the plan of sending a thoroughly organized troop of actors to America; from which circumstance he has been termed "The Father of the American Stage." He associated with himself his

<sup>1</sup> Early days of the American Stage, by John Bernard. <sup>2</sup> Fifty years of a Play-goer's Journal. <sup>3</sup> Judge Daly's Lecture.

brother Lewis, who consented to cross the Atlantic with his wife, and attempt the introduction of the drama into the Western world. His first step was to send as an *avant-courier* one Robert Upton, who was charged with the duty of obtaining the permission of the authorities to prepare a theatre in New York, and to make such other preliminary arrangements as might be necessary. This Upton proved faithless to his trust; for, on his arrival, finding the Nassau street "theatre" unoccupied, he turned the circumstance to his own advantage, and, with the assistance of some of the former occupants he collected several recruits, and tried to maintain a theatre. After a few feeble attempts, disheartened by failure, he left the country. Mr. Hallam, receiving no tidings from his ambassador, continued his preparations. He secured the services of a number of actors of well established reputation and undeniable talents, and put into rehearsal twenty-four of the most approved plays, with attendant farces. When all were familiar with their parts they sailed for America on Board the *Charming Sally*, and after six weeks' passage arrived at Yorktown, Va. The company were not idle during the voyage, but rehearsed all the plays which had been selected, on the quarter-deck of the vessel whenever the weather permitted.

From Yorktown the company proceeded to Williamsburg, where they arrived in the month of June. Lewis Hallam obtained permission of Governor Dinwiddie to give performances and began his preparations. Meanwhile some of his inferior actors went to Annapolis, Maryland, and, associating themselves with the "New York and Philadelphia Company," opened the new theatre, a brick building capable of holding about six hundred people, with the "Beaux Stratagem" and the farce of "The Virgin Unmasked." When Mr. Hallam had completed his arrangements they returned to Williamsburg, and there, on the fifth of September, 1752, Shakspeare's "Merchant of Venice," and Garrick's farce of "Lethe" were represented to a delighted audience.<sup>1</sup>

When the comedians left Williamsburg, Governor Dinwiddie gave the manager a certificate signed in council, recommending the company as comedians, and testifying to

<sup>1</sup> Dunlap's History of the American Theatre.

the propriety of their behavior as men. They then performed in Annapolis and other towns in Maryland, and finally in New York and Philadelphia.

William Hallam meanwhile had remained in England with the understanding that he should receive half of the profits of the enterprise. This engagement was faithfully kept by Lewis until the year 1754, when William arrived in Philadelphia, and, after a brief stay sold his interest to his brother, and returned to England. Lewis Hallam, now sole proprietor, transported the company to Jamaica, where they remained until 1758.

It may surprise some that William Hallam did not send his comedians to New York, Philadelphia, or Boston instead of selecting a town comparatively so small as Williamsburg for their first appearance; but he was well aware that dramatic adventurers would not be welcomed with cordiality, either in New England, Pennsylvania, or New York, where a general hostility prevailed to amusements of all kinds, but especially to stage-plays. New England, which had been settled by the Puritans, retained to a late period that bigoted spirit and hostility to amusements which had characterized many of its original settlers; while in the South the people were more inclined to liberality, and more fond of recreation.

The states of Massachusetts and Connecticut were the strongholds of Puritanism, though in Boston a spirit of tolerance had gained way among the inhabitants, and was making innovations upon their ascetic habits. As early as 1750 two Englishmen had attempted to give a representation of the tragedy of "The Orphan" in the public room of a Boston tavern, and the eagerness of the public to witness the performance occasioned a serious disturbance at the door. The attention of the legislature was thereby directed to the drama, and a law was immediately passed forbidding stage-plays under extremely severe penalties. This enactment for a long time effectually repressed any attempt at producing plays in Massachusetts.

On the return of the Virginia comedians from Jamaica, they desired to enlarge their dramatic circuit, and meditated a visit to Rhode Island, a colony which, as was popularly believed, was, in a great measure, owing to the views of its noble founder, exempt from the rule of bigotry, and which

contained a town famed for the wealth and cultivation of its inhabitants.

The town of Newport claims the distinction of being the first place in New England in which a temple of the muses was raised. Isaiah Thomas in his *History of Printing* says that the first play publicly performed in New England was acted in Providence in 1762. This erroneous statement is repeated in other works of an historical character, and to this day the boast is frequently made by the citizens of Providence that their town reared the first theatre in New England.

It is true that the Virginia comedians played in Providence in 1762, but it cannot be controverted that they had performed in Newport the previous year. Were there no positive proof, it would still be a reasonable inference, judging from the relative importance of the two towns, that when the company arrived from the South they would direct their steps to Newport, a large and thriving place, before visiting Providence, a town scarcely half as populous.<sup>1</sup> It is a matter of record that in the summer of 1761 the company under the direction of David Douglass came to Newport from Williamsburg. In the *Newport Mercury* of Aug. 11, 1761, appeared the following announcement:

"The company of comedians propose to entertain the town for a short time with theatrical performances. As they have been at considerable expense, they humbly hope that the inhabitants will grant them their protection; and, if they are so happy as to meet with encouragement, they propose to give a benefit night for the support of the poor. The following recommendation, copied from the original, was signed by the Governor, Council, and near one hundred of the principal gentlemen of Virginia:

'WILLIAMSBURG, JUNE 11, 1761.

'The company of comedians under the direction of David Douglass have performed in this colony for near a twelvemonth; during which time they have made it their constant practice to behave with prudence and discretion in their private character, and to use their utmost endeavours to give general satisfaction in their public capacity. We have therefore thought proper to recommend them as a company whose behaviour merits the favour of the public, and who are capable of entertaining a sensible and polite audience.' "

<sup>1</sup> At this time Newport contained about sixty Jewish families, many of whom were wealthy; and from these the actors would naturally expect a liberal patronage, as the Jews from time immemorial have been conspicuous in their support of the drama.

It appears from the records of the town that on the first of August a special town meeting was called at the request of a number of freemen, by warrant of the town council, and it being put to vote whether the freemen "were for allowing plays to be acted in town or not, it was voted, not." The players, notwithstanding this intimation of the popular will, prepared a temporary theatre, and gave their initial performance on the 7th of September, consisting of the "Provoked Wife, or a Journey to London," for the benefit of the poor, when the sum of one thousand and thirty pounds, old tenor, was raised.<sup>1</sup> This money was paid by Mr. Douglass to Mr. George Gibbs, who expended it in the purchase of corn, which was stored until the succeeding winter, and then distributed among the deserving poor.

This was the first dramatic performance given in New England by a regular company of professional actors. The theatre was a slight wooden structure, and stood on a lot on the north of that part of the town called Easton's Point, near Dyer's Gate. A violent storm occurred in the latter part of October, and we learn from the *Mercury* of the 27th, that it broke off a part of the steeple of Trinity Church, wrought great injury to the shipping in the harbor, tore up trees by the roots, and "came near spoiling the entertainment" of the ladies and gentlemen at the theatre.<sup>2</sup>

In *Arnold's History of Rhode Island* it is stated that the gale blew down the theatre, and that the comedians narrowly escaped with their lives. That this statement is erroneous appears by the extract from the local paper. Still further: In the *Newport Mercury* of November 3d, there appeared the following complimentary notice of the closing performance of the season, which took place one week after the storm :

"On Friday evening last, the company of comedians finished their performances in this town by enacting the tragedy of 'Douglas' for the benefit of the poor. This second charity is undoubtedly intended as an expression of gratitude for the countenance and favour the town has shown them, and it can not without an uncommon degree of malevolence be ascribed to an interested or selfish view, because it is given at a time when the company are just leaving the place, and consequently can have neither hopes nor fears from the public. In return for this generosity it ought in justice to be told that the behaviour of the company has been

<sup>1</sup> About \$15\$ in Spanish silver.

<sup>2</sup> Bull's Memolr of Rhode Island.

irreproachable; and with regard to their skill as players, the universal pleasure and satisfaction they have given is their best and most honourable testimony. The character they brought from the Governor and gentlemen of Virginia has been fully verified, and therefore we shall run no risk in pronouncing that 'they are capable of entertaining a sensible and polite audience.'

After this charity benefit the comedians left Newport and went to New York, where the republication of this extract from the Newport paper in Gaine's *Mercury*, a New York newspaper, did them no little service, although they met with much opposition from the religious Dutch. They continued playing there during the winter and spring, and early in the summer of 1762 again visited Newport, and gave several performances in the large room of an inn.

An explanation is necessary concerning their contumacious conduct in disregarding the vote of the town-meeting. When they first appeared in Newport they found the more intelligent and influential of its citizens desirous of encouraging dramatic exhibitions, although the majority were bitterly opposed to them, as was evinced by their vote. There was no general statute prohibiting stage-play, and the enemies of the theatre were more numerous than powerful, and were ignorant how to proceed under the circumstances. To conciliate all Mr. Douglass resorted to an expedient similar to that used by John Philip Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in the English provincial theatres to evade the law against playing (12 of Anne), but marked with characteristic peculiarities.<sup>1</sup> He eluded the objections to stage-plays with the same success which in later years attended the substitution of the word "Museum" or "Lyceum" for "Theatre" in several American cities. In some places he had announced to the citizens that he had opened an "Histrionic Academy in order to deliver dissertations on subjects instructive and interesting," and to qualify the visitors "to speak in public with propriety." In Newport he advertised entertainments called "Moral Dialogues." Thus far his method of securing favor resembled that of Kemble, but Douglass showed originality in the form of his bills. The original of the one here presented was preserved by Mr. Morris of this company, and by him given to Mr. John Bernard, the eminent actor, in whose pos-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

thumous papers, published in 1850 in an English Dramatic Magazine, a copy first appeared. It ran in the following manner :

“ KINGS ARMS TAVERN — NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND.

On Monday, June 10th, at the Public Room of the above Inn, will be delivered a series of

### M O R A L D I A L O G U E S ,

IN FIVE PARTS,

Depicting the evil effects of jealousy and other bad passions, and proving that happiness can only spring from the pursuit of virtue.

*Mr. Douglass* — Will represent a noble and magnanimous Moor called Othello, who loves a young lady named Desdemona, and after he has married her, harbours (as in too many cases) the dreadful passion of jealousy.

Of jealousy, our being's bane,  
Mark the small cause and the most dreadful pain.

*“ Mr. Allyn* — Will depict the character of a specious villain, in the regiment of Othello, who is so base as to hate his commander on mere suspicion, and to impose on his best friend. Of such characters, it is to be feared, there are thousands in the world, and the one in question may present to us a salutary warning.

The man that wrongs his master and his friend,  
What can he come to but a shameful end?

*“ Mr. Hallam* — Will delineate a young and thoughtless officer who is traduced by Mr. Allyn, and, getting drunk, loses his situation and his general's esteem. All young men whatsoever, take example from Cassio.

The ill effects of drinking would you see,  
Be warned and fly from evil company.

*“ Mr. Morris* — Will represent an old gentleman, the father of Desdemona, who is not cruel or covetous, but is foolish enough to dislike the noble Moor, his son-in-law, because his face is not white, forgetting that we all spring from one root. Such prejudices are very numerous and very wrong.

Fathers beware what sense and love ye lack,  
'Tis crime, not colour, makes the being black.

*“ Mr. Quelch* — Will depict a fool who wishes to become a knave, and trusting to one, gets killed by him. Such is the friendship of rogues. Take heed.

When fools would knaves become, how often you'll  
Perceive the knave not wiser than the fool.

*“ Mrs. Norris* — Will represent a young and virtuous wife, who, being wrongfully suspected, gets smothered (in an adjoining room) by her husband.

Reader, attend, and ere thou goest hence,  
Let fall a tear to hapless innocence.



"*Mrs. Douglass* — Will be her faithful attendant, who will hold out a good example to all servants, male and female, and to all people in subjection.

Obedience and gratitude  
Are things as rare as they are good.

"Various other dialogues, too numerous to mention here, will be delivered at night, all adapted to the improvement of the mind and manners. The whole will be repeated on Wednesday and on Saturday. Tickets, six shillings each; to be had within. Commencement at 7. Conclusion at half past 10. in order that every spectator may go home at a sober hour, and reflect upon what he has seen, before he retires to rest.

God save the King,  
And long may he sway,  
East, north and south,  
And fair America."

This bill furnishes a proof of the fertility of Mr. Douglass's invention, and occasions regret that others have not been preserved. Mr. Clapp, in his *Records of the Boston Stage* has inserted this bill, and adds that it is undoubtedly similar to those used at the Exhibition Room in Boston about thirty years later. There is no foundation for this assertion, as such elaborate vindications of the morality of the drama were peculiar to Douglass's company, and to the period before the American Revolution. The Boston stage dates back only to 1792, and the sole vestige of the old means of propitiating public favor then existing was the use of the term "Moral Dialogues."

The company in 1762 consisted of Messrs. David Douglass (manager), Hallam the 2nd (son-in-law of Douglass), Allyn, Morris, Quelch, Tomlinson, Sturt, Reed, and Tremaine, Master A. Hallam, Mesdames Douglass, Morris, Crane, Allyn, and Moor, and Miss Hallam, besides several others whose names are unknown. These pioneers of the drama in Rhode Island were not ignorant and unskilled vagabonds, but artists of talent and position. William and Lewis Hallam, the originators of the American dramatic enterprise, were brothers of Admiral Hallam. William, as has already been stated, had succeeded Giffard as manager at Goodman's Fields, when Giffard and Garrick had left that establishment to go to Drury Lane. Lewis was first low comedian at Goodman's Fields, and his wife was a relative of Mr. Rich, the manager of Covent Garden.

David Douglass was a gentleman by birth and fortune, who had emigrated to Jamaica about the year 1750. Hither

had Lewis Hallam transported his Virginia comedians after he had found that the colonies could not yield him an abundant harvest in return for his labors. Here he formed a partnership with Mr. Douglass, who, after the death of Hallam, married his widow, and with her and the rest of the company visited the continent in 1758, where he established theatres successively in New York, Philadelphia, Newport, Perth Amboy, and Charleston, and between these localities he continued to travel, acting and superintending his company, till Congress closed the theatres by an act passed Oct. 24, 1774. After this enactment he returned to Jamaica, was appointed one of King George's Judges, and died universally respected. In his early life he had been a printer, and on his return to Jamaica he became a partner in a thriving printing establishment, and, receiving a valuable contract from the government, he accumulated a fortune of £25,000.

Mrs. Douglass had been an eminent actress at Goodman's Fields, when Mrs. Hallam, and was the heroine of that theatre at the time of Garrick's first success. She came with her first husband to America in 1752, and made her *début* at Williamsburg as *Portia* in the "Merchant of Venice." She had fine talents, and her favorite line was the pathetic. She was much admired both North and South, and Mr. Dunlap says that in his youth he has heard the old ladies of Perth Amboy speak almost in raptures of her beauty and grace, and especially of the pathos of her representation of *Jane Shore*. She retired from the stage in declining health in 1769, and died in Philadelphia in 1773.

Mr. Hallam the 2nd, made his first appearance upon any stage on the first night of the performance of his father's company in America, when twelve years old. He had but one line to speak; but when he came into the presence of the audience he was panic-struck. He stood a little while, very much confused, then, bursting into tears, retired. He afterwards became an accomplished actor, and in 1769 he was principal tragedian and comedian in the company. In 1773, Josiah Quincy said, he had merit in every character he played. In 1774 he went to England to engage performers, and while there he acted *Hamlet* at Covent Garden Theatre with considerable success. After the Revolution he collected a small company of actors of sterling merit, and returned to Phila-

delphia, where he, in conjunction with Mr. John Henry, produced tragedies with such beauty of decorations that he greatly delighted the citizens. He was afterwards a manager in most of the theatres of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Morris played the "old man" in comedy and farce. In 1797, being the oldest actor on the American stage, he still retained his powers sufficiently to keep his place on the boards, and at that time he communicated to Mr. John Bernard the particulars of the introduction of the drama into the New World. He had been one of the original company who arrived in Jamaica from England in 1751, and was well qualified to impart information on the subject.

Nothing more is known respecting the other performers than that they had been selected for their talents and moral worth, and that their behavior justified their reputation.

<sup>1</sup> Dunlap's History of the American Theatre.

## CHAPTER II.

1762.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DRAMA INTO PROVIDENCE—A TOWN MEETING PROHIBITS PLAYS—THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS PETITIONED TO PASS AN ACT TO SUPPRESS THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS—THE ACT IS PASSED—ITS PROMULGATION IN PROVIDENCE—ANECDOTE OF JOHN BROWN—THEATRICAL CUSTOMS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION—COMEDIANS FROM NORTH CAROLINA MAKE APPLICATION FOR LICENSE TO PLAY IN RHODE ISLAND.

AFTER a few performances in Newport the company visited Providence, and opened a theatre in Meeting street, east of Benefit street, near the cadet gun-house and alarm-post. This edifice was little better than a barn, but it was visited by the *élite* of the town, and also by many visitors from Boston and other places, who expressed themselves highly pleased with the performances. The opening night was about the first of July. A printing-press was established in town just at this time, and the first articles printed were play-bills, and a hand-bill headed "Moro Castle taken by storm." None of these bills are in existence, but there is good reason to believe that they were like those used by the same company in Newport a fortnight previously.

Mr. Douglass did not long enjoy unmolested the privilege of delivering "dissertations" at his "Histrionic Academy" in Providence. He had opened it without asking leave of the authorities, at which disrespectful conduct many of the citizens were offended, and, at a town-meeting on the 19th of July, 1762, specially called by warrant at the request of a number of freemen of the town, Daniel Jenckes, Esq., moderator, it was voted and resolved that the actors should not be permitted to exhibit stage-plays, and that the deputies of the town should be instructed to make application to the General Assembly at their next session to have an act

made for suppressing all kinds of stage-plays, or theatrical shows within the colony.

The actors disregarding the town vote, as in Newport, continued to perform regularly; which conduct so incensed the opponents of the drama that they drew up a petition to the General Assembly, praying the immediate suppression of all theatrical entertainments. The objections which these good people assigned for their hostility to the theatre may be learned from the original petition, a copy of which is here presented:

*"To the Honourable General Assembly of the Colony of Rhode Island, now sitting at East Greenwich, Aug. 23, 1762:*

"The petition of us, the subscribers, inhabitants of the County of Providence, humbly sheweth that a number of stage-players have lately appeared, and a play-house has lately been built in the town of Providence, that the inhabitants of said town being legally called by warrant did, at their late town meeting, by a large majority, pass a vote that no stage-plays be acted in said town; yet the actors, in defiance of said vote, and in defiance of the public authority of said town have begun, and are now daily continuing to exhibit stage-plays and other theatrical performances, which has been, and still is, the occasion of great uneasiness to many people in this Colony, but more especially to your Honours' petitioners in this county, humbly conceiving that so expensive amusements and idle diversions cannot be of any good tendency among us, especially at this time, when this Colony as well as others is labouring under the grievous calamity of an uncommon draught, and very great scarcity of hay and provisions.

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that you will take this matter into your consideration, and make some effectual law to prevent any stage-plays, comedians, or theatrical performances being acted in this Colony for the future.

"And your petitioners further pray that Elisha Brown and Barzillai Richmond may be admitted further to present this affair to your Honours. And as in duty bound, will ever pray," etc.

This petition was ostensibly signed by four hundred and five male inhabitants of the county, the population of the town at this time being about four thousand. The original copy had only two hundred and fifty-four names appended to it, the first in order being those of John Graves, Missionary, Samuel Winsor, Elder, Joseph Snow, Pastor, Edward Mitchell, Elder, and Joseph Winsor, Elder. It is believed that there were other copies in circulation which obtained enough names to make the aggregate of signatures four hundred and five. It is noteworthy that all the names subscribed to the

original draught are in one handwriting, and that the only evidence there is of any signers having been obtained for the auxiliary petitions are certain computations at the foot of the original.

The petition was presented to the General Assembly on the 24th of August, and immediately found favor in both Houses. A committee consisting of Captain Benjamin Groome and William Potter from the lower House, with Joseph Harris from the upper House, was appointed to prepare a bill accordingly. They went to work without delay, drew up an act on the model of one which had passed the Massachusetts Legislature, and reported it the next day to the Assembly, who instantly adopted it.

On the day of the presentation of this petition, an address in opposition thereto was forwarded to Daniel Ayrault and Augustus Johnson, requesting them to use their influence with the General Assembly that the players might be permitted to act sometime longer, as the signers and a number of their friends in Boston were very desirous of attending the entertainments. The address was signed by B. Lechmere, John Brown and eight others.

The subject was thus hastily disposed of without the deliberation merited by its importance, because at that time party politics ran high, and, the suppression of theatrical entertainments being made an issue, the dominant party advocated the measure with so much violence that no opposition could withstand them. The act was pervaded by a rancorous spirit, and its severity contributed to make it inoperative in after years. Although in some respects it resembled that of Massachusetts (its preamble and first two sections being almost *verbatim* copies of it), it exceeded it in severity. The Massachusetts act imposed a penalty of £20 for each day's letting of a building for the representation of plays, and on the actor a penalty of £5 for playing when more than twenty persons were congregated together. The Rhode Island law imposed a penalty of £50 for each day's letting of a building for the representation of plays, and £100 on the actor who played. The facilities for procuring convictions were numerous. Any freeholder could prosecute before the Inferior Court, and, if that was not soon to be in session, a Special Court of the Justices could be summoned for the

purpose of hearing the complaint, and there could be no appeal from the decision of such court. The prosecutor could use as witnesses the spectators, who incurred severe penalties if they should refuse to give evidence ; and he also received half of the penalty after conviction. Thus, if ten actors should perform in a play, the informer's share of the spoils would be £500

Such was the law as enacted for general operation, and for the statute book ; but it possessed a supplement having reference to Providence, and consisted of a preamble and a clause prescribing the mode of promulgation in that town. It was worded as follows :

"Whereas, a number of stage-players have lately appeared, and a play-house has lately been built in the town of Providence, and the players have continued to act in spite of a vote of a large majority of the inhabitants at a town meeting called by warrant.

"It is enacted that the more speedily those persons may have the earliest notice, the Governor is requested to issue a warrant, directed to a proper officer or officers in the County of Providence, directing him or them, forthwith, on sight and receipt thereof, to immediately proclaim the act by beat of drum through the streets of the compact part of the town of Providence, any law, custom, or usage to the contrary notwithstanding."

After the passage of the act, Paul Tew, the sheriff of the county, brought a copy from the Assembly, and attended the theatre with it in his pocket ; and, after the performance was finished, he drew it forth and read it to the audience. Of course plays were now at an end in Providence and Newport, but the comedians continued to play in other colonies till Congress recommended the suspension of all amusements of a public nature. The business of the theatres throughout the country was at once destroyed, and the players were forced to betake themselves to the West Indies, or to remain in retirement until the end of the war.

Tradition recites that before the passage of the act by the Rhode Island Legislature, by which stage plays were declared unlawful, the enemies of the drama, impatient at the delay of the law, took upon themselves to abate the theatre as a nuisance ; but their intentions were frustrated by the energetic conduct of John Brown, the most prominent citizen of the town, who, with the assistance of some friends, having drawn the cannon from the neighboring gun-house to the protection of the building, threatened to fire upon the tres-

passers if they should commit any violence. This timely action intimidated the fanatics, who withdrew without executing their purpose, although they soon afterwards enjoyed a triumph when the theatre was closed by the legislative enactment.

Before the Revolution there prevailed many customs which, if revived at the present day, would occasion surprise.

The entrance to the boxes was always by the stage-door, and gentlemen passing to them were in the habit of stopping upon the stage, mingling with the performers behind the scenes, obstructing the actors, and annoying the actresses with their attentions. In some theatres they actually had seats on the stage itself. On the 31st of December, 1761, there appeared in a New York newspaper this notice, inserted by Mr. Douglass :

“Complaints have been made that a number of gentlemen crowd the stage, and very much interrupt the performances; and, as it is impossible the actors should do that justice to their parts they otherwise would, it will be taken as a particular favour if no gentleman will be at the stage door unless he has previously secured himself a place in either the stage, or upper boxes.”

About a fortnight later the manager, advertising the tragedy of “Romeo and Juliet,” with the funeral procession of *Juliet* to the tomb of the Capulets, appends to the bill the following note :

“That the procession may be conducted with necessary decorum, we must renew our application to the gentlemen to give us the entire use of the stage.”

The close proximity of the boxes to the stage is indicated by an advertisement which appeared in the same paper on the 3d of May, 1762, directly after a benefit for a charity school :

“A PISTOLE REWARD will be given to whoever can discover the person who was so very rude as to throw eggs from the gallery upon the stage last Monday, by which the clothes of some ladies and gentlemen in the boxes were spoiled, and the performance in some measure interrupted.”

DAVID DOUGLASS.”

Upon the return of the actors at the restoration of peace, but few attempts were made to renew the custom of passing upon the stage.



As the ladies used to complain of the partiality of the manager in the assignment of particular seats, the bills announced not only the hour of beginning the performances, but also the hour at which the doors would be opened for the admission of servants to secure seats for their masters. At about six o'clock on the nights of performance the servants purchased the tickets, chose the most desirable seats and occupied them until the coming of their employers with their families, when they vacated them, and retired to their homes, or to the upper circle. Thus the theatre at the rising of the curtain usually presented a variegated appearance, with numerous black serving-men retaining seats for late comers, in close proximity to the belles of the day.

The actors played only twice a week ; a season in a town of a few thousand inhabitants comprising generally twenty-four nights, at the conclusion of which each of the chief performers took a benefit, and performances were given for the benefit of two or three of the inferior actors collectively, and lastly for some public charity. The beneficiaries visited the houses of the principal citizens to dispose of tickets. Their calls were generally welcome, and the tickets were liberally purchased. A gentleman felt honored in being thus called upon, considering it an acknowledgment of his influence as a citizen, and of his taste as a patron of the drama. This practice was however soon discontinued, on account of the various inconveniences which attended it ; the actor in most cases feeling a sense of degradation in thus personally soliciting patronage, and also being unwilling to submit himself to the mortification of a contemptuous refusal when by accident he addressed some strict enemy of the stage, and the patron himself not always being willing to compete with others in the purchase of tickets. Douglass's company dropped the custom at an early period ; for, at the foot of a bill announcing the benefit of Mrs. Douglass in February, 1762, we find this paragraph :

"The ceremony of waiting on ladies and gentlemen at their houses with bills has been for some time left off in this company; the frequent solicitations on these occasions having been found rather an inconvenience to the persons so waited on than a compliment."

The manager always travelled with a "character" from the governors of the respective colonies, in the manner of the

old companies in the time of Queen Elizabeth ; and after he had gained entrance to a town, he seldom dared openly to advertise plays, but substituted less objectionable terms, as has been previously stated.

Mr. Douglass never again attempted to establish the drama in New England ; but in a few years after his departure another manager contemplated visiting Rhode Island, as will appear from the following letter received by Governor Ward, and now on file in the office of the Secretary of State :

NORTH CAROLINA, BRUNSWICK,  
the 15th of June, 1768.

SIR : Mr. Mills, who is the manager of a company of comedians, intends to solicit your permission to act in some parts of your Government. He has therefore entreated me to mention their behaviour during their stay here of six months, which, as far as I have understood, has been decent, orderly, and proper.

“ I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

“ WM. GRYON.”

“ Governor Ward.”

These comedians never came to Providence, probably because Governor Ward advised them of the existence of the statute prohibiting theatrical entertainments.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that dramatic performances took place in Newport in 1767, but the report is untrue. The facts are as follows : On the 26th of August, 1767, the brig *Dolphin*, John Malborn, master, from Jamaica, with a cargo of rum and sugar was destroyed by fire off Block Island. On board this vessel were John Henry, his wife, and seven or eight other actors as passengers, five of whom were burned to death. The survivors landed at Newport, and contributions for their aid were taken up the ensuing Sunday by the several religious societies ; after which they removed to New York, where Henry made his first appearance on the American stage in the following December.

## CHAPTER III.

1790-1795.

RETURN OF THE ACTORS AFTER THE REVOLUTION—IN 1790 THE PETITION OF HALLAM AND HENRY TO OPEN A THEATRE IN BOSTON DENIED—JOSEPH HARPER, ATTEMPTING TO GIVE A THEATRICAL EXHIBITION THERE IN 1792, IS ARRESTED—HE VISITS PROVIDENCE WITH A COMPANY OF ACTORS—PUBLIC SENTIMENT FAVORABLE TO A THEATRE—ACTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL—PLAYS ENACTED IN THE COURT HOUSE—THE TOWN COUNCIL OF NEWPORT LICENSES A PLAY-HOUSE BY PERMISSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY—ANOTHER COMPANY PERFORMS SEVERAL NIGHTS IN PROVIDENCE—THE COFFEE HOUSE THEATRE—THE BILL OF THE PLAY—EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT THEATRE—DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW THEATRE.

AT the close of the Revolution the players returned, and performed successively in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and elsewhere in the South. Henry went to England, and came back with reinforcement for his company. In 1790, he and his partner, Hallam, petitioned for leave to open a theatre under proper regulations in Boston, which application was refused. The next year a petition, signed by many literary gentlemen of the town, setting forth the advantages of well-regulated public amusements, was presented to the selectmen, requesting them to take the opinion of the inhabitants on the subject of permitting a theatre in the town of Boston, and on instructing their representatives to obtain a repeal of the prohibitory law. The subject was debated in town-meeting, and a committee was appointed to draw up instructions to the representatives. The instructions state that the inhabitants of Boston consider the prohibitory law of 1750 an infringement of their privileges, and that a theatre, where the actions of great and virtuous men are represented, will advance the interests of private and political virtue, and for such reasons instruct their representatives to obtain a repeal of the law, so as to permit theatrical

representations, sanctioned by some authority appointed for that purpose. In January, 1792, the subject was introduced into the House of Representatives, but the strenuous efforts of the friends of the drama could not effect the repeal of the law. The principal advocates of the repeal were William Tudor, Dr. Charles Jarvis, and Rev. Mr. Gardiner; the opponents were Samuel Adams and Benjamin Austin, the latter of whom wrote a series of essays to prove that *Shakspeare had no genius!*

Notwithstanding the result of the debate in the legislature, Mr. Joseph Harper, one of the prominent members of Hallam and Henry's company, by the advice and assistance of several influential citizens, opened a convenient theatre, where he gave exhibitions in August, 1792. The government officials deemed this conduct an open insult to the laws, and a defiance to themselves; and Governor Hancock, who was bitterly opposed to the stage, in his annual message, in November, to the Legislature, called their attention to the fact that actors were daily violating the statutes, and enacting plays under the transparent disguise of "Moral Dialogues," or "Lectures," and recommended such action as would bring the offenders to condign punishment. The Legislature, concurring with the views of the Governor, promised him that they would adopt such measures as might be necessary to give effect to the law. They however passed no additional acts; but the State officials in Boston were incited to increased activity, and, on the 5th of December, Mr. Harper was arrested. At the end of the second act of the "School for Scandal," he came upon the stage and informed the audience of his arrest, and read a card from the sheriff, threatening to arrest the whole company unless the performance ceased. The audience were much agitated, but, at the request of the performers, quietly retired, refusing to receive back the admission money. Mr. Harper was brought before the Court on the next day, but was soon discharged from custody on motion of his counsel, because the complaint had not been grounded on an oath. He immediately proceeded to perform plays as before, but was stopped by a second warrant, executed during the performance, which so incensed the spectators that they pulled down the painting of the State arms, but were at length quieted by Judge Tudor.

Mr. Harper now found that he could not continue in Boston, and therefore decided to remove to Providence. He was aware that, although the law against theatrical entertainments had not been repealed, public opinion in Rhode Island condemned its severity, and reprehended the spirit of its framers. He at once came with his company to Providence, but did not proceed to acting until he had consulted the principal citizens, and learned their views.

Much interest was taken in the movements of the players, and numerous communications on the subject were sent to the *Providence Gazette*, one or two condemning the insolence of the comedians in entering the State, but the greater number advising tolerance. One of each kind is here presented.

The first correspondent says, that

"He has heard with pleasure of the virtuous and patriotic exertions of Governor Hancock in suppressing the progress of a company of strolling stage-players, who were in actual violation of the laws of Massachusetts, but that it is with concern he hears that the same company are now in town endeavoring to induce the citizens to establish them here, in violation of a good and wholesome law of the State, which lays a fine of £100 lawful money upon the person found in transgression thereof, recoverable by any person who may sue for the same, either at a special court, or Court of Common Pleas. This information is given as a caution against their further proceeding to violate the said law. The civility shown by the Town Council in suffering them to reside in the town so long as they live in obedience to the law, is consistent with the liberal policy which has characterized the State. But there are bounds, and it is hoped that none will go beyond them by giving offence to the law."

A writer friendly to the stage in his communication, after intimating that Governor Hancock was influenced by political motives, thus continues :

"Permanent good frequently flows from partial evil, and it will not be forgotten that the banishment of the benevolent Roger Williams laid a foundation for the settlement of this State. The interests of religion and virtue should certainly be our first care, but a theatre under proper regulations, it is humbly presumed, would not prove incompatible with this object. In the old world, time out of mind, the drama has been countenanced by the wise and the good, and in the Middle and Southern States theatres have been licensed. Let us not then suppose that all wisdom and virtue is confined to New England, or that religion consists altogether in austerity. The law of this State passed against stage-plays was confessedly passed at a time when parties ran high, and was probably founded on sinister views. That it may be repealed is the wish of numerous friends to this town as, well as to the State at large, and of every friend to rational and innocent amusements."

These sentiments accorded with those of the editor, who appended to them the following remarks :

"The comedians referred to are said to be a set of decent, orderly people, and respectable in their profession. So far as has been observed of them here, they are remarkably temperate, studious, and engaging in their manners."

In a few days the comedians had assured themselves that they had the good will of the more influential of the citizens, and prepared to give entertainments. On the 10th of December the town council voted to grant them such liberty of giving theatrical exhibitions as was in their power to grant, namely : that the council would not prosecute the performers, or support any person who should on his own account begin such a prosecution ; on condition that the proceeds of the sales of tickets on every fifth night should be collected by the town sergeant, and by him be paid into the town treasury. So far were the authorities from being opposed to the desires of the actors, that Mr. Harper obtained the Court House for the place of exhibition, and, converting it into a temporary theatre, produced several comedies and farces, and also a pantomime, called "The Birth, Death, and Animation of Harlequin."

The novelty of the entertainments, and the favor with which the players were regarded, ensured for them good houses for every performance. On one occasion a party of visitors from Pawtuxet came to town to attend the play, and attempted to gain admission to the Court House, but the crowd within was so dense, that they were obliged to return home ungratified. Tickets were sold at half a dollar apiece, and were obtainable at Dixon's stage office, and at the printing-office in the Market House chambers.

Even at this late date the comedians dared not announce the performance of plays, but still adhered to the term, "lectures." The comedies were usually designated as comic lectures, tragedies as moral lectures, and farces as humorous or entertaining lectures ; but there was no disguise for the pantomime. The performance began at an early hour, the door being open at five, and the curtain rising at six o'clock.

Mr. Harper met with so much encouragement this season that he would gladly have protracted his visit, but, as he had

made engagements to be in Philadelphia some time in January, he was obliged to take leave of the town. In the month of February a small company, under the management of Messrs. Solomons and Murray, inferior actors who were subsequently employed in Boston by Mr. Harper, obtained permission to give three theatrical exhibitions on condition of paying to the town sergeant for the use of the poor, three-fourths of the proceeds of the tickets of the first evening. These performances met with but little encouragement, being destitute of merit.

It is easy to perceive that the prohibitory law had become unpopular; and one is not surprised to learn that, at the February session of the General Assembly the town council of Newport were empowered to grant licenses for theatrical entertainments, notwithstanding any law, custom or usage to the contrary, provided that the State House in that town should not be used for that purpose.

Mr. Harper gave no representations in Providence during the year 1793, as he profited by the permission of the legislature, and played in Newport. He however was not unmindful of his Providence friends, as will appear from the following advertisement inserted in the *United States Chronicle*, of June 13th :

"Messieurs J. Harper and H. Placide respectfully acquaint the public that by the middle of this month they will open a theatre in Newport, in the State of Rhode Island, wherein will be represented all the theatrical entertainments to be seen in America. The theatre is a large brick building, and will be elegantly furnished. It will be open from the middle of June to October."

The theatre thus referred to was the brick market, which was built in 1762 by the town of Newport, from proceeds of lotteries granted for that purpose by the General Assembly, on a lot given to the town by the proprietors of Long Wharf. It was three stories high, sixty-five feet long by thirty-three feet broad, and was intended for a public granary, but was never used for that purpose. Before the Revolution the lower story was occupied as a market, and the second and third stories were used for shops and offices. After the Revolution the upper stories were used as a printing-office until 1793, when they were leased by the town to Alexander Placide, and by him converted into a play-house.<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Newport Mercury.

theatre was occupied by various companies of actors at different intervals of time, until 1842, when it was altered into a town hall.

When Mr. Harper returned to Providence in 1794, he found that his friends were exerting themselves to provide him with better accommodations than the Court House had afforded him two years before, and were about to prepare a place of entertainment having some semblance to a theatre. Before these arrangements were completed, several members of his company gave exhibitions for their own benefit in the public halls. At the end of December the theatre was ready for opening. It had been fitted up behind Major McLane's Coffee House, but formed part of the same building, which, long known as the "Old Coffee House," was destroyed about 1855 to make room for the Bank of Commerce building and the adjoining edifice. The addition used as a theatre had been pulled down long before. The entrance to the boxes was at the first door east of the Coffee House; and that to the gallery was at the north end of the building. The opening performance took place December 30, 1794. A copy of the first bill is here presented :

*"By authority."*

#### "THEATRE, PROVIDENCE.

"Mr. Harper most respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of this town that the new theatre will be opened on Thursday evening next, 30th December, with a Comedy called

#### THE FOUNDLING, OR VIRTUE REWARDED.

Sir Charles Raymond,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Kenna.
Sir Robert Belmont,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Clapham.
Col. Raymond,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Copeland.
Young Belmont,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Harper.
Faddle,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Watts.
Rosetta,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Metchler.
Fidelia,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Harper.

To which will be added an entertainment called

#### THE KING AND THE MILLER OF MANSFIELD.

King Henry,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Watts.
Lord Lurewell,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Copeland.
The Miller,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Kenna.
Dick, (the Miller's man),	-	-	-	-	Mr. Harper.



Joe, with a song in character,	-	-	-	Mr. Clapham.
Peggy,	-	-	-	Mrs. Harper.
Margery,	-	-	-	Mrs. Metchler.
Kate,	-	-	-	Mrs. Watts.

" Tickets to be had at the Post office; and places in the boxes may be taken at the bar of the Coffee House every day of the performance from 9 to 12 A. M., and from 2 to 6 P. M.

" The doors will be opened at 5 o'clock, and the performance will begin precisely at 6 o'clock.

" Boxes, 6s.; Pit, 3s.; Gallery, 2s. 3d."

At first the curtain rose at six o'clock, but that hour being found too early it was soon changed to six and a half. At the bottom of the bill it was recommended that those who wished to secure particular boxes should send their servants at a quarter before five o'clock.

In the early days of the American stage the term "comedian" had not the restricted signification which is now assigned to it. Comedians performed every season with equal success tragedy, comedy, melodrama, opera, farce, and pantomime. It was expected in every theatre that all the performers should be able to sing, and there was no company of respectability that could not perform the old English operas. The comedies which were most approved in 1795 would not be tolerated at the present day upon the stage. In the Spring of that year several plays of such objectionable character that they have long since been shelved were received with general approbation; such as "Barnaby Rattle," "Provoked Wife," "Deuce is in Him," "Devil to Pay," "Beaux Stratagem," and "The Beggar's Opera," which was produced with additions and alterations April 13th, being the last night of the season, when Mr. Harper personated *Captain Macheath*, and Mrs. Harper, *Polly*.

The next day, April 14th, a meeting of gentlemen interested in the permanent establishment of the stage in the town was held at McLane's Coffee House, and subscriptions for a new theatre were so liberally promised that a building committee was immediately appointed to make the necessary contracts, with the understanding that the work was to be completed at Commencement time. John Brown gave the lot and subscribed for seven shares of stock. Messrs. T. L. Halsey, Sr., John Corliss, Cyprian Sterry, and George and Jeremiah Olney were also liberal in their subscriptions. As soon as a

sum sufficient for the completion of the building had been guaranteed workmen began to prepare the frame, and on Thursday, Aug. 6, 1795, commenced raising the edifice. The work was pushed forward with energy, and when it seemed doubtful whether it would be possible to have it ready for use at the time proposed, the prospect was at once brightened by a demonstration of good will from a quarter where it was scarcely looked for. All the carpenters of the town, clubbing together, formed a "bee," and, abandoning all other employments, labored without fee or reward upon the edifice until the opening night. As the work progressed the town was on tiptoe with expectation, and such was the general good feeling prevailing that it was manifest that the drama was to become a permanent institution.

This theatre was situated at the corner of Westminster and Mathewson streets, on the site now occupied by Grace Church. It was eighty-one feet long by fifty feet wide, fronting on Westminster street. Access to the interior was gained by three doors in front; the entrance to the boxes being in the middle, that to the pit on the East, and that to the gallery on the West side. Over the middle door was suspended a light wooden canopy, which served both for ornament and for a protection from rains. The theatre contained two tiers of boxes, a gallery, and a pit. The proscenium was sixteen feet high by twenty-four wide; and over the arch was a scroll bearing the motto: "Pleasure the means; the end virtue," a pithy sentiment worthy of adoption by every theatrical manager. The few scenes that were prepared were tolerably good; but as no act drop was painted, the traditional green curtain was obliged to serve a double purpose.

## CHAPTER IV.

1795-1810.

THE OPENING OF THE NEW THEATRE—THE PROLOGUE—THE COMPANY—  
"GEORGE BARNWELL"—MR. VILLIERS—"BUNKER HILL"—HODGKIN-  
SON—MRS. WHITLOCK—"THE STRANGER"—GERMAN PLAYS IN VOGUE  
—AARON BURR ATTENDS THE THEATRE—PHANTASMAGORIA—REAP-  
PEARANCE OF HODGKINSON—HIS DEATH—THE TRAGEDIAN COOPER—  
ANACHRONISMS IN COSTUME—BATES'S BENEFITS—NEWSPAPER CRITI-  
CISMS—ANECDOTE OF AMATEUR THEATRICALS—PROLOGUE BY PAUL  
ALLEN—JOHN HOWARD PAYNE—TERMINATION OF MR. HARPER'S  
MANAGEMENT—THEATRICAL CUSTOMS—MR. AND MRS. HARPER—  
WILLIAM BATES—ANECDOTE—NEWSPAPER STRICTURES ON THE IM-  
MORALITY OF THE THEATRE—MR. AND MRS. DARLEY.

THE efforts to have the new theatre ready for Com-  
mencement-Day were so far successful that Mr. Harper  
advertised a dramatic performance for the second of  
September, but as all the requisite arrangements could not  
be completed in time for opening it on that day, the in-  
augural performance was deferred until the next evening,  
when to an interested audience were acted with *éclat*, "The  
Child of Nature," and "Rosina, or the Reapers." Preceding  
the comedy an occasional address was pronounced by the  
manager, a copy of which has been preserved, and is here  
presented. It is unknown who was its author, but the pre-  
sumption is, that it was written either by Paul Allen, or Miss  
Ann Maria Thayer, both residents of Providence, and known  
to have had commerce with the Muses:

### PROLOGUE.

"The eye contemplating this simple dome  
Views not the art of Greece, the wealth of Rome;  
Nor towering arch, nor roof of vast design,  
Which prove the virtues of the Parian mine;  
Nor Painting's touch, nor Sculpture's breathing mould,  
Nor Life enchased in elephant and gold.

It boasts them not; alas, it boasts alone  
 The wish to please—and let that wish atone.  
 Ye fair, who deign our efforts to repay,  
 Ye give its honours, and ye take away.

“ Here to your eyes we hold the mirror true,  
 Here pass your virtues in their bright review.  
 Nor cold reproof, nor satire's caustic smart  
 Can crimson Virtue's cheek, or chill her heart.  
 Laugh then secure, or yield to Pity's call;  
 The strokes of censure on the guilty fall.  
 Here view yourselves, nor fear t' applaud the scene,  
 Live o'er your lives, and be what ye have been,  
 Give to th' unbidden tear its generous flow,—  
 Not more can Pity give to fancied woe;  
 Nor fear that hid beneath the mimic guise  
 Vice waits her victim with impatient eyes.  
 Here shall ye learn with purity of heart  
 To meet the artful in the fields of art.  
 The eye which beams intelligence and love  
 Shall learn to blend the serpent with the dove,  
 The righteous claim of bashful worth to scan,  
 And well discern the coxcomb from the man.

“ In ancient days when Rome could boast her name,  
 When Scipio fought, and Terence wrote for fame,  
 Ere taste, or genuine wit were forced to yield,  
 And low buffoonery had usurped the field,  
 The Roman stage was Virtue's primal school.  
 There heroes learned to conquer and to rule,  
 And (while they wept as mimic woes were shown)  
 To feel for others', and t' endure their own.  
 Nor did the jest, ambiguous and obscene,  
 Disturb the cheek of Innocence serene—  
 But Nature's mother-wit, sublime and chaste,  
 Met the full voice of Modesty and Taste.  
 If such the manners of the Roman age,  
 Such must delight when Yankees seek the stage.  
 See a new Rome in western forests rise,  
 Her manners simple, and her maxims wise,  
 These t' improve, to cherish fresh and fair  
 Shall be our best reward, our only care.  
 This humble house, its office so divine,  
 With more than all Vitruvius' art shall shine.  
 Enough for us, we rest secure the while  
 Of Virtue's plaudit, and of Beauty's smile.”

The company was larger and possessed more talent than that of the previous year; for the old American company having divided, Hodgkinson had led part of it to Hartford, where he opened a theatre in August, 1795, while Hallam added the remainder to the company under the management of Harper, and came to Providence. Thus reinforced, it con-

tained Messrs. Hallam, Harper, Patterson, Prigmore, Hallam, Jr., Wools, Miller, Copeland, Tompkins, and Humphries, and Mesdames Hallam, Metchler, Harper, and Kenna,—a number sufficiently large to perform with success a few standard comedies, but in those containing numerous *dramatis personæ* deficiencies were supplied by what is technically called “doubling.” It may be truly said that in the early days of the American stage, “one man in his time played many parts,” frequently sustaining two or three of the lesser characters in the same play, and that, too, aided by changes of dress, so skilfully that audiences seldom had suspicions of the variety of shapes taken by these Protean performers.

On the 7th of this month the tragedy of “Percy and Elwina” was performed. A correspondent of the *United States Chronicle* thus describes its effect upon himself :

“Mr. Printer: I attended the theatre on Monday evening last, and cannot help saying a few words on the subject of the performance. It appears to me that the tragedy of “Percy and Elwina,” is filled with excellent sentiments, and the public exhibition of it must be useful. The company of comedians, I think, did themselves great honour. I was particularly pleased with the gentleman who did the part of Douglas; he acted a jealous madman to the life. Old Lord Raby did the distressed father beyond anything I had any idea of. I could not help crying with him. The part of Percy I was much delighted with, but Elwina, poor girl, I shall not forget you as long as I live.

“ Yours,

Z.”

To the bills was appended the following notice :

“Tickets and places for the boxes to be had at the theatre, of Mr. Copeland, every day of performance, from 9 to 12 A. M., and from 3 to 9 P. M. As the door-keepers are prohibited in the strictest manner from taking money at the door, it is hoped that every visitor of the theatre will provide himself with tickets.

“The doors will be opened at 6, and the performances will begin at 7 o'clock.

“Ladies and gentlemen are requested to send their servants by half past 5 at farthest, to keep places in the boxes.

“Boxes, 1 dollar; Pit,  $\frac{3}{4}$  dollar; Gallery, two and three pence.

“Nights of performance, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.”

The theatre closed November 2d, when Harper's company again united with Hodgkinson's and went to Boston.

The tragedy of “George Barnwell” was produced the next season, and through the whole time of Mr. Harper's manage-

ment, and that of the gentleman immediately succeeding him, it continued to be performed at least once every winter, by reason of the moral influence it was supposed to exert over the minds of youth. It soon became repulsive to many who witnessed its performance, but nevertheless the managers, firmly convinced of its value, were unwilling to lay it aside, and persisted in administering the nauseous dose.

The prevalence of the yellow fever, and other causes made the season of 1797 a broken one. The chief performers in tragedy were Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, both of stately appearance, but the lady superior in point of talent. The low comedian, admired by all who could relish genuine humor, was Mr. Villiers, a young gentleman of education, who had left good connections in England to become a player in America, assuming the name of Villiers for family reasons.

In November for Mr. Barrett's benefit was produced for the first time in Providence, the new tragedy of "Bunker Hill," a miserable compound of fustian, which had proved very remunerative to the theatrical treasury in Boston. It was well received here, and the company then left town, to produce it in Newport. Miserable as the play was, it survived many dramas superior to it in every respect, and was often brought out on the fourth of July in New England cities for the benefit of visitors from the rural districts. It has a history of its own. It was written when politicians indulged in party feelings with a virulence now unknown, and which was wont to seek expression at the theatre. The design of the author was to gratify the animosities of the anti-federalist portion of the public, and it was originally produced in Boston at a theatre raised by democratic subscriptions for the purpose of establishing a democratic drama.<sup>1</sup> A good conception of the character of this play is afforded by a brief criticism which President Adams is said to have made upon it in New York. He happened to be in the city when this piece was performing there, and was invited to attend. At the conclusion of the entertainment he was conducted by the manager and the leading actors to his carriage with considerable pomp, and Mr. Barrett, who had played *General Warren*, ventured to express a hope that the President had been pleased,—“Sir,” replied Mr. Adams, “my friend, Gen-

<sup>1</sup> Bernard.

eral Warren, was a gentleman and a scholar, but your author has made him a bully and a blackguard."<sup>1</sup>

This season Mr. Harper found it necessary to reduce the price of admission to the pit to fifty cents, and to the gallery to twenty-five cents.

The season of 1798 was short but brilliant; for the celebrated actor, Hodgkinson, came here with the Boston company, and played several nights near Commencement. In this company were Mr. Dickenson, and Mr. and Mrs. S. Powell, who afterwards became established favorites as artists with the citizens of Providence, and who as individuals were worthy of the general esteem in which they were held by their contemporaries.

This year the statute against theatrical representations was repealed. A committee, previously appointed by the General Assembly to revise the laws of the State, and to make such amendments and alterations as might appear to them useful, reported the result of their labors, which, being ratified by the Legislature, was at once printed, and is now known as the Digest of 1798. In this revision the statute does not appear.

The great event of the next year was the appearance of Mrs. Whitlock, sister of the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. She opened the fourth of July in the character of *Isabella*. Her fine acting was appreciated as it merited, and attracted large audiences. The "Castle Spectre" drew two full houses, and the "Stranger," produced for the first time in Providence, was much admired.

Mrs. Whitlock was the sister of Mrs. Siddons, John Philip Kemble, Stephen Kemble, and Charles Kemble. She was an admirable actress, who had established a good reputation at Drury Lane, had played at Bath, and after her marriage with Mr. Whitlock had acted under the management of Whitlock and Munden in the provincial theatres, being the main support of the company. In features she resembled the Kembles, but her complexion was fairer, and she had not their imposing stature. Her eyes were very expressive, and her voice was powerful, and reminding the spectator of her eminent sister, sometimes raised expectations, which were not fully realized, of seeing a second Siddons.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clapp's Record of the Boston Stage.

<sup>2</sup> Dunlap.

During the years 1800-1 the plays most in vogue were translations from the German. Baron Kotzebue's dramas were exceedingly popular in Germany and England, and became models for the dramatic writers of the day. The American stage owed their introduction to Mr. Dunlap, who was indefatigable in translating them. These plays have long been shelved, as they tend to the development of mawkish sentimentality, and are believed to lessen the abhorrence of vice.

The company that appeared at the theatre on the 27th of June, 1803, was almost entirely new to the citizens of Providence. It contained Messrs. Harper, Darley, Wilmot, Dykes, Perkins, Bates, Coles, West, and Buckingham, with Mesdames Darley, Harper, Dykes and Simpson, and Miss Bates. Performances were given only twice a week. On the 7th of July, "Abælino, the Great Bandit," was produced, and the audience expressed so much satisfaction that it was repeated. It was announced in the bills as "the best dramatic work of the best dramatic writer of the age, Schiller." This statement of the authorship of the piece was erroneous, the play being the work of Zchokke, a German novelist and play-writer, translated by Dunlap, who did not disclose the name of the author. It is the original of a great many imitations, some of which are now occasionally reproduced.

On the 24th of July, Aaron Burr, Vice-President of the United States, arrived from New York by packet, and was hospitably entertained by his numerous friends. On the 28th, the "Point of Honour, or School for Soldiers," and the "Highland Reel" were played. The Vice-President having signified his intention of visiting the theatre, it was announced in the bills. A crowded audience was in attendance, and enthusiastic cheers welcomed him on entering.

On the occasion of Mr. Bates's benefit, in 1804, a part of the entertainment consisted of Phantasmagoria, being a display of optical illusions, exhibiting the following phantasies: The March of Father Time; the King of Terrors; a female spirit rising from the tomb; Ghost and Hamlet; Washington; Bonaparte, etc. The newspapers of the day in their account of the performances remark that the appearance of the head of Washington was hailed with rapturous applause,



and "an emphatic hiss of contempt and detestation spontaneously rose to salute the shade of the bloody usurper Bonaparte, 'a pompous wretch, accursed upon a throne.'"

At the end of July, 1805, Hodgkinson arrived in town and played a few nights. On the 5th of August he took his benefit, appearing in the tragedy as *Macbeth* to Mrs. Simpson's *Lady Macbeth*, and in the afterpiece as *Lingo*. By his arrangement with Mr. Harper he received no remuneration for his acting, except on this benefit night, when the entire proceeds became his. After 'this performance he went with the company to Newport, and there played his last engagement. He then set out for Washington, but, as he was passing through New York, he was taken with an epidemic fever and died near Washington, the 12th of September. Mr. Jansen, an English lawyer, at that time residing in Providence, says that Hodgkinson in his last hours was attended by Mr. Hopkins, one of the performers, who soon after sickened, and died of the same disease that proved fatal to the friend whom he had nursed.

Mr. Hodgkinson was much above the common height, with full chest, broad shoulders and erect carriage. He had great versatility of talent and burned to be admired as an universal genius. Though many of his admirers lavished unbounded praise on all his impersonations, and impartial critics accused him of ranting in tragedy, every one admitted that in pure comedy he had few equals, and that in comic opera he could not be surpassed.

The tragedian, Thomas A. Cooper, appeared for the first time in Providence during the week succeeding Commencement. On the occasion of his benefit he played *Othello*, dressed in the Moorish costume, in which we are accustomed to see the Othellos of the present day attired. At that time, however, it was an innovation which was violently assailed by some critics. In 1789, only fifteen years previously, Henry used to act the part in the uniform of a British general officer. Dunlap saw John Philip Kemble, in 1786, "in a suit of modern military of scarlet and gold lace, coat, waistcoat, and breeches. He wore white silk stockings; his face was black, and his hair was worn in a queue." Garrick first adopted the Moorish dress, and was much censured for so doing. Kemble introduced the use of the turban, and many

patterned in this respect after him. A critic of much taste in the *Mirror of Taste*, a dramatic review published in Philadelphia, referring to the new custom, asks whether Othello wears the turban out of compliment to the Ottomites he is sent to overthrow, or to the malignant and turbaned Turk who beat a Venetian and traduced the state? This, he thinks, is studying the picturesque with a vengeance.

When Hodgkinson played *Macbeth* in August, he was habited in Scottish costume, and thus the character has always been played in America. Macklin changed the dress from a modern one, and succeeding actors have wisely adopted the substitution.

Bates, the low comedian, had his benefit September 30th, when was presented for the first time in America the comedy, "Who wants a Guinea?" The announcement of his benefit and of the plays to be performed was made in verse; and for several seasons in succession it appeared in this form, always beginning with the same heading and initial lines. The verses had no poetical merit, and so little wit that they scarcely deserve to be quoted. A few, however, are here presented:

"THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE, ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY.

"On Monday evening next, as the play-bill relates,  
To discount other bills is a bill of Bill Bates,  
To which he invites all the town, grave and gay,  
To see wit and humour portrayed in a play.  
'Twas wrote by young Colman, a whimsical ninny,  
To interrogate wittily, who wants a guinea?  
To which Bates replies, as an indigent elf,  
He hopes there's none wants one so much as himself.  
So, respectfully now on the public he draws,  
Who his credit support by lending applause,"—

and so on to the end, particularly naming each part of the evening's entertainment. Bates's idea was subsequently much better elaborated by the lamented Finn, whose poetical advertisements, sparkling with wit, were eagerly expected in Boston, and when published were extensively copied by the newspapers.

In the month of August, 1807, Mr. Morse, a graduate of Brown University, and a pupil of Cooper, played here three nights, and it was prophesied by his friends that he would

attain eminence in the histrionic profession. The theatre closed on the 12th of October, the receipts being for the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Harper.

On the 19th of the same month it was reopened for the performance of "Douglas" and the "Agreeable Surprise," by a Thespian Club for the benefit of the poor. A large audience was in attendance, perhaps the largest ever congregated up to that time in the theatre, as many persons were present who had never before witnessed a dramatic representation. The regular actors had left town the preceding week, though Mrs. Harper and one or two other ladies remained and assisted in the plays. The male characters were personated by young gentlemen of the town, the part of *Douglas* being sustained by Benjamin Paige. The performance progressed smoothly until the end of the fifth act, when the young hero dies in the embrace of his mother, *Lady Randolph*, played by Mrs. Harper. A young man of the name of Smith, well known as a *bon vivant*, whose potations this evening had been unusually frequent, had looked from his seat in the pit with a contemptuous eye on the efforts of his friend, Paige, during the early part of the play, but when the catastrophe approached, and he saw him expiring fall into the arms of Mrs. Harper, who in the struggle of death clasped him to her bosom, he broke out in a voice that plainly betrayed his admiration, tinged perhaps with envy, "That's the happiest death you'll ever die, Benny!"

The shouts of laughter that hailed this outburst, though they disconcerted the performers, indicated how thoroughly the audience appreciated the spirit of the remark.

The performance on this occasion was begun with an original Prologue, contributed by Paul Allen. It was recited by Mr. Cambreling with such feeling as to create a most favorable impression, and to give to the poem a "music scarce confessed its own."

#### PROLOGUE.

BY PAUL ALLEN, ESQ.

" All who, with cynical contempt, refuse  
And shun all commerce with the tragic muse,  
Have yet to learn (though many a comic scene  
On this eventful stage may intervene)

That soon the hour of fond delusion's past,  
 And life is but a tragedy at last.  
 Search nature through, and tragedy appears  
 In every shape; the husband's, widow's tears;  
 The orphan of a mother's care bereft,  
 To want, to pride, to griping guardians left;  
 The wretched beggar, whose unsheltered head  
 Is white with snows by seventy winters shed,  
 Beholds the 'wildering tempest round him roar,  
 And knocks at wealth's inhospitable door; —  
 These dire examples show in nature's plan  
 How deeply tragic is the life of man!  
 We copy life, and show by transcript fair  
 The melancholy picture, *what we are*,  
 Whatever grief the drama has in store,  
 The Earth, that stage of life, abounds with more.  
 Not hoarding Av'rice, now, with sordid views,  
 Invokes assistance from the tragic muse:  
 To comfort those oppressed with want or care,  
 The many evils life is doomed to bear;  
 To flush the cheek of sorrow with delight,  
 This mimic tragedy appears to-night.  
 "Come then, ye noble souls, whose hearts can feel,  
 O tender sympathy, thy holy zeal!  
 Assist our common labours for relief,  
 And kindle sunshine on the face of grief!  
 Then, when returning from dramatic woes,  
 Your heads shall press the pillow of repose—  
 Soft as yon moonbeams slumbering on the cloud,  
 Dreams of delight shall every sense enshroud."

This club performed for the same praiseworthy object, "The Fair Penitent" and "The Spoiled Child," on the 2d of November.

In June, 1808, the interior of the theatre was tastefully repainted by Mr. Warrall, of the Boston Theatre. The company contained Messrs. Caulfield, Bates, Dykes, Harper, Bailey, Jones, Huntingdon, Claude, Stockwell and Vining; also Mesdames Claude, Harper, Dykes, Downie and Bates. Mr. Jones was scenic artist. Mr. Vining was the principal vocalist, and Mr. Caulfield, who had been brought from Drury Lane by Mr. Bernard in 1806, was the chief tragedian. The evenings of performance were Mondays and Thursdays.

The season of 1809 began on the 4th of July. The additions to the company were Messrs. Mills, Barnes (who had just married Miss Bates), Adams, Robertson and Andrew J. Allen. September 8th brought a "star," the "young Amer-

ican Roscius," Master Payne, then seventeen years of age. Much pleasure was experienced by the play-goers during this engagement, and every one was loud in praise of the young actor. The editor of the *American* first heard him at a private party read several poems, and in his next issue eulogized him in the warmest terms as a prodigy of talent; at the same time asserting that his own judgment was impartial, that he had struggled against the popular prepossessions, but had been involuntarily caught by the magnetism of Master Payne's manner.

"It has been," he concludes, "the usual fate of genius to contend with the public insensibility and neglect. The trial has in most instances been too severe, and genius has fallen a victim in the contest. A struggle of another kind, though less arduous, awaits Mr. Payne. He has to contend with the admiration of the public; he has to continue to deserve it. Let him reflect that the splendid plume that he now wears on his brow, tinged by the beams of an auspicious sun, may lose its lustre forever. Popular applause has often proved a Delilah's lap, in which those who slumber are shorn of their strength. In his future exertions he has our best wishes, and we should feel an honest pride in their eventual accomplishment. Many will think this paragraph a tame subservience to flattery, which we have not manhood to resist. To these hunters for mean motives for actions coldly just, a contemptuous silence shall be our only reply."

Payne played only two nights; on the 8th, *Hamlet*, and on the 11th, *Octavian*, in "The Mountaineers." His uncommon beauty and his modest air won for him the admiration of all. His form was slight, and not capable of great physical exertion; his features were round and smooth, evidencing juvenility; and his vocal organs were only partially developed. All these were obstacles to astonishing effects in those characters requiring a powerful frame and marked features, but, though they militated against successful personation in scenes of turbulent passions, his few defects were counterbalanced by a soundness of judgment that would have done credit to experienced actors, and by the tenderness and pathos with which he delivered affecting passages. The critics in other places considered *Norval* his best part, but he did not attempt it here.

His eventful life terminated in 1852. Among his numerous literary productions was the opera of "Clari," which contained the affecting song, "Sweet Home." This piece made the fortune of every one connected with it. It gained

for Miss M. Tree (the sister of Mrs. Charles Kean), who first sang "Home, sweet Home," a wealthy husband, and it filled the theatre treasury. More than one hundred thousand copies of the song were sold by the original publishers, whose profits within two years after it was issued, amounted to two thousand guineas. It is said that Mr. Payne did not receive the pitiful sum that was to have been paid to him on the twentieth night of performance, and that he was not complimented by the publishers with a copy of his own song.<sup>1</sup>

1810 was the last year of Mr. Harper's management in Providence. He had found that of late years the theatre under his direction was not such paying property as he had wished and expected. The novelty of theatrical representations had long since worn away, and it was with difficulty he could obtain profitable houses, except when his expenses were increased beyond prudence by the engagement of "stars," or the production of spectacles. At first he was able to give three performances a week, but latterly the receipts scarcely supported two. To those conversant with theatricals this lack of success will not occasion surprise, but they will rather wonder that so small a town as Providence could maintain a theatre for a single season, and that, too, at a time when actors were regarded with aversion by a considerable part of the community. In Boston, a much larger place, the theatre was never profitable until Mr. Powell assumed the managerial *bâton*.

The families who had originally established the theatre in Providence were wealthy and influential, and felt bound to bestow a liberal patronage on those whom they had encouraged to come here, and who catered for their amusement, and consequently they frequently attended the theatre. The proprietors owned boxes in which their families had regular seats. Many others, following the example of the leaders of fashion, often visited it, and thus it seldom presented an empty appearance. The price of admission being high, the rougher inhabitants of the town were in a measure excluded, and the audience was orderly, quiet, and polite. Then the term "dress circle" was no unmeaning name. The ladies

<sup>1</sup> Record of the Boston Stage.

and gentlemen of the town, the Corlisses, the Nightingales, the Halseys, and others came in their carriages, and entered the boxes with powdered heads and dressed in the stately costume of the period. Between the acts their liveried servants entered the circles, bearing trays laden with wines and sherbets, and served them to their masters and mistresses. These refreshments were procured at a small bar or refectory attached to the theatre. Thus the theatre was made the scene of fashionable reunion, the place of full dress, of elegant demeanor, and of polite intercourse. In those days there were no concerts, no lectures, no panoramas, and no Ethiopian serenaders to rival the attractions of the drama, and, as the facilities for communication with the large cities were few, the citizens of the town were compelled to rely upon their own resources for recreation. Hence the theatre came to be the focus at which the beauty, fashion, and intelligence of Providence regularly met.

Inclement weather, however, always diminished the attendance of the *habitués*, and Mr. Harper, when the skies wore a threatening aspect, was accustomed to postpone the performance, giving notice of such postponement by means of the town crier, who with his bell, announced at the corners of the streets that the theatre would be closed until fair weather. Whenever the season was unusually inclement, frequent postponements took place, and the manager would sustain considerable loss. When this fact was communicated to the stockholders, they used to unite for the purpose of bettering the condition of his treasury. Thus, the season of 1796 had been so unfavorable that the management had lost money by their Providence campaign; in consideration of which circumstance the proprietors on the 22d of July tendered a benefit to the company. In reference to this occasion the following editorial notice appeared in the *United States Chronicle*:

"This evening the proprietors have generously agreed to forego their privileges in the house for the benefit of those who merit so much for their exertion to please. It is hoped that a full house will recompense their exertions, and stimulate them to continue that line of conduct which they have heretofore followed, and which would do honour to any theatrical corps in the United States."

By particular desire of the proprietors on this occasion, the "Provoked Husband" was played, Mr. Powell as *Lord Townley*, and Mrs. Powell as *Lady Townley*. If this comedy, then performed by "particular desire," should now be produced, its licentiousness would excite general disgust.

At other times social festivities were very frequent, and, as a result the theatre was neglected; but its friends would eventually come to its aid, and make good the losses sustained. Thus, in 1802 the attendance of the fashion of the town had been very small on account of numerous balls and parties. At this juncture a friend of the drama by a well-timed communication to one of the newspapers established a better state of affairs. He suggested the propriety of omitting the entertainments of assemblies, balls, and parties, while the theatre was open, as it was only a small part of the year that the citizens could be favored with dramatic performances, it being difficult and expensive to maintain a company whose talents would command the respect of the amateurs of theatricals, and, as the ladies and gentlemen who usually attended the assemblies were the friends of the theatre, and its most brilliant and enlivening company.

Whenever the company was rather deficient in talent, or when from the caprice of the public, or from the excessive heat of the weather the audiences became very small, Mr. Harper would find himself unable to remunerate his company so well as he wished. During these disastrous periods they were sore pressed to make a subsistence, and it is said that some of them actually suffered from hunger. It is related that at one of these extremely severe times Kenney, the "first old-man" of the company, went into Major McLane's Coffee House at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, that being the hour at which it was the custom of the merchants to assemble there for a lunch and a brief moment of conversation, and, approaching a group of gentlemen, addressed Col. Ephraim Bowen, who sat among them, and asked if he knew of any one who had need of a set of teeth. The Colonel expressing surprise at the inquiry, Mr. Kenney remarked that he had a very good set of his own to dispose of, having no use for them. The gentlemen commiserating his necessitous condition, at once provided him with a dinner, and made him a substantial present. Kenney was very tall, and generally



wore dove-colored clothes. He was liked by the public, who sometimes forgot that their favorites needed their attention, but when reminded of their claims, always endeavored to atone for the remissness of the past by increased liberality. This incident, it should be remembered, occurred when the town was very small.<sup>1</sup>

Certain occasions always brought good audiences to the theatre. These were Independence Day, Commencement Day, Training Day, and, during Mr. Harper's residence in Providence, St. John's Day. The manager and several of his company were Free Masons, and on the occurrence of their benefits or of the annual festival of the order, the fraternity attended the performances in large numbers. The programmes then announced that the entertainments were "under the patronage of the most worshipful Grand Master of the most ancient and honourable fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Rhode Island."

About the year 1805, the following notice was appended to the play-bills :

"It is earnestly requested that no person will carry a lighted cigar into any part of the theatre, or attempt to renew the very dangerous practice of smoking, either in the lobbies, or in the presence of the audience."

There was urgent necessity for this notice ; for many persons were in the habit of leaving their seats during the intermissions to obtain refreshments, and of promenading the lobbies with lighted cigars. As the lobbies were small, and the doors to the auditorium were open, the smoke penetrated within, and annoyed the occupants of seats. Sometimes, indeed, lads would bring cigars into the gallery and other parts of the house, but that practice never prevailed to a great extent. At this time there was much fear in the neighborhood that the theatre would take fire, and certain reports concerning the peril to which the building was exposed impelled the manager to take all the precautions requisite for its safety.

<sup>1</sup> A death in any of the principal families would seriously affect the attendance at the theatre. On the 19th of September, 1808, the following notice was placarded in the town :

"THEATRE.

"POSTPONEMENT.

"The much lamented death of the Hon. Judge Bourne, of Bristol, whose funeral is this day attended by his numerous friends and connections, imposes on Mr. and Mrs. Claude the painful necessity of postponing the Entertainments, announced for this Evening, until Wednesday Evening, Sept. 21, when the performance will positively take place.

"Monday, Sept. 19."

Similar requests in regard to cigar smoking appeared about this time in other towns, and long afterwards formed a regular part of theatrical bills. The manners of Americans in general were then unpolished, and, at promiscuous public assemblies, indecorous to a disgraceful degree. Mr. Jansen, in his "Stranger in America," a very severe book on this country, published in 1807, reprobates in the strongest terms the behavior of the audiences in our theatres. His censure was applicable to those in Southern cities.

Mr. and Mrs. Harper had by their private worth endeared themselves to many friends, and their society had been courted by some of the best families of the town; but as performers they had lost much of their power of attraction. Their acting had been witnessed night after night by the same audiences, and it therefore lacked the charm of novelty. Seen too frequently, even their merits became tiresome, and their defects appeared more prominent. It was hard that he who had so assiduously labored to create a taste for the drama should be obliged after years of faithful service to leave the scene of his toil and seek a new home. As we have seen, he had withstood fanatical laws, and the bigoted hostility of individuals, in his efforts to plant the drama in New England; and by his perseverance and zeal he had succeeded in living down opposition, accomplishing his dearest wish, while his private character had dissipated many of the prejudices against his profession. He was like the pioneer who conquers the ruggedness of nature, and sows seed, the fruit of which, those who come after him, reap. Mr. Harper and his wife on their departure bore with them a multitude of kind regards.

In his youth Mr. Harper was considered handsome. He had fine teeth and expressive eyes, but his face was slightly marked with small-pox. He personated characters of every description, from *Richard III.* to *Falstaff*. In the latter part he was for a long while unrivalled, there being no other representative of the fat knight in America. Eventually he resigned the part to Mr. Bates.

Mrs. Harper was an amiable woman, but possessed no great talent as an actress, though there were a few characters which she performed very well. She became somewhat fleshy as she advanced in years, and was little inclined to

study ; hence not unfrequently she was negligent of her duty, and gave offence by imperfectness.

Bates was a true son of Momus, a fellow of infinite jest, equally amusing on the stage and in private life. Of him it might be said with truth :

“ His life was laughter, and the ludicrous  
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world—this was an *actor*.”

Like many other comedians he had in early life labored under the mistaken idea that he was peculiarly adapted to tragedy. He was a broad, short, strongly-built man, with low comedy written on every feature. Mr. Dunlap, however, who was no admirer of him, says it was low, conceited cunning. At any rate in some comic parts Bates shone brightly, especially in that of Sir John Falstaff, whose unctuous sensuality and waggish knavery he represented with an *abandon* and a relish that made the personation appear a complete identification. In spite of his figure, his agility as Harlequin in pantomimes was surprising, and the height of his leaps was an unfailing source of admiration to the young. A ludicrous anecdote is related of him, by his friend Bernard. Bates was engaged in Covent Garden Theatre when Reddish and Smith were its stilted tragedians, and he thought it proper to adapt his own bearing to theirs ; so, having on one occasion to announce somebody's carriage, he did it with all the declamatory pomp of old Quin. Smith heard him,—stared, and angrily asked why he couldn't say, “The carriage waits” in a natural manner ; whereupon Bates replied with a deprecatory air, “'Pon my word, Mr. Smith, I thought I had kept down the *sentiment* completely.” This anecdote has been fastened upon Wignell, but Mr. Bernard, who was well acquainted with both Bates and Wignell, assigns it to the former. Wignell was the manager who found Mr. Bates in 1773 filling a subordinate station in one of the London theatres, and brought him to America with other performers engaged by him. When he came under Mr. Harper's management he used to visit Providence every year, and then go with the company to Charleston and the other places in their regular circuit, but in the later years of his stay in Providence, he had become weakened by the approaches of age, and illness prevented him from fulfilling winter engagements.

He had therefore to depend for subsistence solely on the profits of the summer campaign here and in Newport, which were often very small. He, however, managed to eke out his means by giving one or two exhibitions of a humorous character in the winter season when there was a dearth of amusements. His distresses were also alleviated by the kind assistance of a benevolent gentleman.

Bates's benefits were always well attended, and, in general the performances were satisfactory to the audience; but on one unlucky occasion, in the year 1809, he made an injudicious selection, bringing out the comedy of "The Beaux Stratagem." The house was full; but it proved an unfortunate performance for the theatre, as the licentiousness of the play offended the patrons, and evoked severe strictures on stage exhibitions from the opponents of the drama. The fault was not wholly in the comedy; for Mr. Bates had presumed upon the indulgence of his friends, and gave additional breadth to its humor, already sufficiently gross. Several letters from indignant correspondents appeared in the papers, and, in *The American*, a warfare against theatres was waged for a number of weeks by a writer signing himself "Moralitas." Others defended them, but "Moralitas," though evidently prejudiced and too positive in his assertions, had the best of the argument. He was capable of writing well, and moreover had the greater part of his readers on his side, their minds having been biased by whatever they had seen deserving of censure in the obnoxious comedy; while those who took up arms in defence of the stage were the actors themselves, unaccustomed to literary composition, and having scarcely anything to adduce in justification of Mr. Bates's conduct. The strictures of "Moralitas" on the characters of actors were not sufficiently qualified, and were understood to be aspersions on the private lives of the performers then in town. He was therefore constrained to publish a card expressing his regret that his attack on theatrical performances should have been mistaken for an attack on the actors, and stating that he "had hoped that two or three gentlemen well known in the town and much respected (one of whom had spent much time with us, and established a character of which the author would speak in the highest terms, had he the right to speak at all of the characters of individuals),

would have thought themselves excepted when he said, 'some of them, I am told, are entitled to respect,' and, in speaking of actors generally as he has done, such were undoubtedly excepted."

We owe to Mr. Harper the introduction of Mr. and Mrs. Darley to our citizens. Mr. Darley came to this country when a boy with his father who was a celebrated singer. He often appeared upon the stage to assist in choruses, but afterwards entered the navy as a lieutenant of marines. He however abandoned his new profession, returned to the stage in 1800, and married the beautiful and accomplished Miss Ellen Westray, one of the most fascinating beings that ever graced the stage. He performed light comedy very well, but singing was his *forte*, and his aid in operatic pieces was invaluable. He died about 1850, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

Wherever Mrs. Darley played she charmed all beholders by her vivacity, and rare personal beauty and grace. The critics of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, vied with one another in praises of her excellence, and for many years she was the pride of the American stage. Her society was much courted in every place she visited, and in every circle she entered she became the chief ornament. She was an "ever-during" source of inspiration to the young poets of the time, who racked their imaginations to find wherewithal to liken her perfections. Others searched their memories for comparisons, and decked her with all the graces ascribed to the goddesses of classical mythology, or the heroines of history; from Venus to Publicola's sister,

" Chaste as the icicle  
That's curded by the forest from purest snow,  
And hangs on Dian's temple."

Soon after her return to Boston from a visit to another part of the country in 1802, she received the following compliment through the channel of one of the public papers:

" As on Olympus' lofty brow  
The Heavenly Fair assembled sat,  
Look'd down on mortals here below,  
And talked of this and talked of that :—

" Says Juno, ' Who, of Heavenly birth,  
Obedient to our high command,

Will freely wing her way to earth,  
Awhile to grace the Thespian band?'

"Nature, soft, simple, modest, mild,  
In sweetest accents begg'd to go:  
Fair Venus kiss'd the prattling child,  
And lent the magic cestus too.

"Columbia owns her power to move,  
The cold to warm, the savage tame,  
With pity melt, or wound with love—  
And Darley calls her favorite's name."

This poem was supposed to be the production of Paul Allen, at that time the poet of Providence, whose odes were read on every public occasion, and whose fugacious verses appeared from time to time in the periodicals of Providence and Boston.

Mrs. Darley removed in 1812 to Philadelphia, where she died in 1848, in the seventy-first year of her age, lamented by a large circle of attached friends.

Many others of Mr. Harper's company are still remembered by our older citizens. There was Mrs. Marshall, whose hearty, joyous manner, made her a most charming actress in romps and similar characters—the delight of every theatre in which she played, charming the spectators by her naturalness and sparkling vivacity. Then there were Mr. and Mrs. Villiers, honored by all; Mr. and Mrs. Young; Mrs. Barnes, who continued to reside among us for a long series of years; and Mr. Andrew J. Allen, who subsequently essayed the management of a theatre in Dorrance street, and died several years ago in New York. He was the last of all the performers whom Mr. Harper brought to Providence, and only a few of the spectators who used to attend the theatre in those days survive him.

## CHAPTER V.

1811-1812.

THE THEATRE LEASED BY POWELL AND DICKSON—A LIBERAL PATRONAGE BESTOWED ON THE NEW MANAGERS—THE PRESS DEMAND THE ENGAGEMENT OF MR. MORSE—JAMES ENTWISTLE—THE THEATRE AT RICHMOND DESTROYED BY FIRE—A PETITION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF THE PROVIDENCE THEATRE CIRCULATED—GREAT EFFORTS MADE TO PROCURE SIGNATURES—THE CONTEST IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY—SPEECHES OF JOHN WHIPPLE AND TRISTAM BURGESS—THE SUBJECT REFERRED TO A SPECIAL COMMITTEE—ANECDOTE OF THOMAS L. HALSEY—AN ACT IS PASSED RESPECTING THE PROVIDENCE THEATRE—THIS ACT WITHHELD FROM THE STATUTE BOOK—ACTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL.

THE Providence theatre opened for the season of 1811, on the first of July, under the auspices of Messrs. Powell and Dickson. Mr. Powell leased the building for five years, agreeing to pay an annual rent of two hundred dollars; and to allow nightly thirty box tickets, which at an average of forty nights a season would amount to twelve hundred dollars. By this contract the stockholders obtained fifteen per cent. on the cost of the edifice (\$9,300).

The new managers were as competent for their business as any that have ever figured in America. They brought with them from Boston, a company far superior to Harper's, and at once revived the dramatic taste. The company contained, besides the managers, Messrs. Duff, Darley, Entwistle, Robertson, Barnes, Vaughn, Drake, and Bailey, and Mesdames S. Powell, Duff, Barnes, Drake, Mills, Doigne, and others.

The initial performance consisted of "The Mountaineers," and "The Weathercock." During the second week Mr. Duff produced "Three and the Deuce," in which he personated three characters; and this novelty ensured its frequent repetition. Performances were now given three times a week.

The public were not slow in recognizing the merits of the actors, and on the 11th of July a correspondent of the *Rhode Island American* congratulated his townsmen on the improved condition of theatricals, and the managers on the liberal support they had received, and would continue to experience so long as they should maintain the existing standard of excellence. "The best productions of the English dramatists," he wrote, "are presented (here) as well as in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and I have no hesitancy in saying, from the regularity with which the business is conducted, and the judicious arrangements of the entertainments, that the Providence theatre will become a school of morality." During this season "Forty Thieves" was played, with the original music, dresses, and decorations with which it had been performed in Boston forty nights. The *Mustapha* of Mr. Dickson, and the *Morgiana* of Mrs. Duff were much admired, and the play was represented six nights; books with descriptions of the scenery, and the words of the song, being sold at the box office.

The patronage bestowed on the theatre was as liberal as could be desired, and the managers labored to retain the favor of their patrons. Play-going was "all the rage" until a slight disagreement with the public occurred about the end of August. Mr. Morse, a gentleman well known in the town, having been a student in Brown University, had gone to Boston several years before to begin the study of law. His towering figure, muscular and well-formed limbs, together with some elocutionary skill which he had displayed, attracted the attention of the tragedian, Cooper, who, after some preliminary tuition, brought him upon the stage in November, 1806. From that time Mr. Morse gradually improved as an actor, until his fame had spread over New England. In 1807 he had played three nights in Providence, and had then shown indications of such considerable ability that many of the theatre-goers were now desirous of seeing how well his maturity had fulfilled the promises of his youth.

He arrived in Providence, for the purpose of visiting his friends, early in August, 1811. The newspapers announced his arrival, and suggested that he should be forthwith engaged at the theatre. Many of the citizens concurred in this desire. Notwithstanding this expression of the popular wish,



the play-bills did not announce Mr. Morse. The editors were chagrined at the seeming slight from the managers, and, being also willing to teach the new comers that they must look to the press for directions concerning their conduct, urged the town to stay from the play-house, and let Messrs. Powell and Dickson see the folly of denying their wishes, asserting that the citizens had a right to prescribe what entertainments they desired to enjoy. The articles grew more threatening in tone in every issue, and the *Rhode Island American* was especially loud in its denunciations of the management.

At first the managers did not regard these demonstrations, but at length, fearing that their silence might do them an injury, they published in the *Gazette* a card, in which they informed the public that they had offered Mr. Morse an engagement for the remainder of the season upon the terms given to the best actors of the theatre, and that the offer was the best their circumstances warranted. This announcement was of service to the theatre, as it made known the endeavors of the managers to gratify the wishes of their patrons, and allayed the acrimonious feelings which had been manifested. The matter was soon forgotten after Mr. Morse had given public recitations, and the theatre regained its popularity.

Mr. Morse shortly afterwards went to London, where he met with indifferent success. He there mingled in scenes of dissipation, and on his return to Boston had lost one of his eyes. On the breaking out of war with England he entered the army, but on the return of peace he was in a state of destitution. He, however, made a vigorous effort, a change came over his life, and, at the time of his death he was a clergyman, settled in Virginia.

The season was brought to a close on the 27th of September with a series of benefits for the leading performers. James Entwistle, the low comedian,—and a good one he was, too—on his night appeared as *Shylock* in the "Merchant of Venice," and *Risk* in "Love Laughs at Locksmiths." *Risk* was the first character he had personated in this country, and in it he always gained applause: so when his friends expressed doubts whether he could play *Shylock*, he replied that should he incur

"Risk by his *Shylock*, being out of his station,  
His *Risk* in the farce would secure approbation."

Entwistle, who was desirous of playing tragedy, carried comedy in his face, and even in his dress; his very hat seeming to have a comical twist. Wherever he appeared he became the centre of an admiring circle, and every remark he made was hailed with transports of delight. He boarded on North Main street and was known to all the region boys for his waggeries, his witticisms having general currency. The poor man, however, must have had tragedy in his soul; for he very soon died under circumstances too painful to relate.

About the first of the following January, news of a great calamity at Richmond, Virginia, reached Providence. The theatre was destroyed by fire, and many lives were lost. From some mismanagement of the lights the scenery was ignited, the flames spread with rapidity, and the cry of "Fire!" rang through the house. The occupants of the pit and gallery at once made their escape, but those in the boxes were not so fortunate. The entrance to the hall was narrow and approached by a winding passage; and the struggle to gain it was so great that it became blocked up. All present might have escaped, if they had jumped into the pit, but no one thought of that expedient. They became panic-struck. The smoke blinded them, and, terrified by the progress of the flames, they became powerless, and were trodden under foot, or perished in the raging fire. Seventy-one persons, including the governor of the State, lost their lives by this disaster. The next day all places of business in Richmond were closed, a law was passed prohibiting amusements of every kind for the term of four months, and the citizens wore mourning for a month. At Washington the representatives of the several States assumed the customary badges of grief, and all amusements were suspended. This sad occurrence created a deep sensation throughout the country, and in Providence it produced an unusual gloom and depression.

It was now deemed by some well-meaning people an auspicious time for renewing an attack upon the Providence theatre, and, believing, or affecting to believe, that the recent calamity at Richmond should be regarded as a manifestation of the Divine displeasure at the increase of theatres, they at once began to bestir themselves. Two years previously many labored addresses against theatrical entertainments had appeared in the local newspapers, and an opinion had pre-

vailed that the promoters of the views maintained in those articles had been influenced not so much by their zeal for the public morals, as by more selfish considerations. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that some who had been connected with the former onslaught were identified with the new movement. A petition was immediately prepared, reciting numerous charges against actors and theatres, and asking the General Assembly for an enactment to suppress the theatre in Providence. This petition was industriously circulated, and it soon became well known that its friends, in their eagerness for numbers, had obtained the signatures not only of respectable men, but of mere lads, and even of some of the most disreputable characters of the town. It was taken by the town-sergeant, "Deacon" James Hammond, a worthy functionary, who, in dress and manners was the ideal of a parochial beadle, into the public schools, and the teachers encouraged their pupils to sign it. One master in particular was very authoritative in urging his scholars to subscribe their names, arguing that the effect upon the legislature would be much enhanced, could that body perceive the rising generation thus zealous in the cause of virtue, and predicting a disastrous fate for those who should refuse to comply with his wishes. A venerable gentleman, living until recently, remembered to his sorrow how severely he was whipped because he withheld his name.

While the petition was circulating, the preachers were fulminating every Sunday in their pulpits, and inciting their hearers to "come up to their help" against the great social evil in the community; and during the rest of the week the morality of the drama was the subject of continual debate, both in private circles and in the public prints. The opponents of the petition were all the most intelligent and influential citizens, except the Ives and the elder branch of the Browns; but the staunchest friends of the theatre were Thomas L. Halsey, Sr., James Brown, Moses Lippitt, John Corliss, the elder Nightingales, and Col. William Blodget. Several elaborate essays, *pro* and *con*, appeared in the columns of the *American* and *Gazette*, and never before in Providence was the subject discussed at such length, or with such earnestness and ability. The articles then published were the productions of the most literary men of the town, and, if they should be reprinted, would now be read with interest.

It happened that a party issue was made on the success of this measure. The town was nearly equally divided in politics; and the indefatigable zeal of Philip Martin, Charles Hartshorn, and Ezekiel Burr in circulating the petition was ascribed to their desire "of blowing up the federalists." These gentlemen were active members, each of one of the religious societies in the town, and were doubtless innocent of any political designs; but when the report gained currency that they were influenced by sinister motives, it may readily be perceived how futile would be all their exertions in some directions, and how many persons, previously friendly or indifferent to their plans, at once became hostile to them. It was said that some who had signed the petition, influenced by the representations of others, were desirous of withdrawing their names, after having found that these representations were untrue. The intention of the enemies of the stage was to have the theatre immediately closed, "once and forever," and to declare invalid the contract by which the stockholders had leased the building to the managers for a number of years; but, when it was argued that such a proceeding would be manifestly unjust to both parties, they consented that, in the contemplated legislation there should be some provision respecting the lease, or that arrangements should be made for the purchase of the theatre, as it stood, for about \$2,400. Influences were brought to bear upon the town authorities, and, on the 27th of January the petition was presented for their approbation to the town council, who passed a resolution that the law prayed for would be highly beneficial to the town, and recommended the General Assembly to enact the same.

Early in the session of the General Assembly, which convened Feb. 24, 1812, the petition was presented, and Saturday, the 29th, set down for the day of hearing. At the appointed time the subject was debated. John Whipple, then a young man, appeared at the bar of the House in behalf of the petitioners, and Tristram Burges, whose advertisement proffering his services of an advocate in the General Assembly was about that time conspicuous in the Providence newspapers, represented their opponents. Mr. Whipple did not on this occasion display those talents which a few years afterward made him so eminent; yet he was not want-

ing in zeal, not to say ferocity of manner and language. He denounced the drama as a species of black art, which had debased mankind, and had incurred the vengeance of the Almighty. He was so unsparing of his denunciations that he injured the cause he was advocating. Mr. Whipple had little sympathy for the written or the acted drama, and has been heard to avow that he had never witnessed, and never would witness, a theatrical performance.

Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, the poet, told Mr. Charles Blake that she remembered Mr. Whipple as a regular visitor of the theatre during the first engagement of Clara Fisher, and that he was a great admirer of Miss Kelly in 1828. It is probable that his sentiments respecting the influence of theatres were modified in his later years.

Mr. Burges created a profound impression by his defence of the drama. He reviewed its history from the earliest times, and urged that, if it became debased, it was by reflecting the public mind; its own natural tendencies being elevating and refining. He showed the erroneousness of the statements of the petitioners, and made tatters of their arguments, in a speech abounding in quaint metaphor and cutting irony. He was frequently interrupted by the applause of his hearers, and the concluding portion of his address produced such an effect that after he had resumed his seat a long pause ensued, as though no one felt competent to proceed.

After a short interval it was voted to postpone the further consideration of the subject in the House, and to refer the petition to a special committee of five, consisting of one member from each county, who were instructed to hear the allegations and evidence upon both sides of the question. This postponement was deemed equivalent to a defeat, and gave great offence to the promoters of the petition. The *Patriot* asserted that that course was determined upon because "federalism feared a falling off of some of her disciples, however the question might be decided, and dared not meet it until after election."

The committee met at the Court House in Providence on the 16th of March, and proceeded to hear the evidence adduced for and against the petition. The testimony showed that the inmates of the house of Mr. E. Talbot, which was situated next west of the theatre, were inconvenienced by

nuisances committed in the vicinity, and were often in fear of fire. Further than that, not much was proved against the theatre, although one of the counsel read many lewd passages culled from the works of dramatic writers, and endeavored to convince the committee that the plays performed nightly before modern audiences were equally vile and demoralizing. After hearing both sides in full, the committee expressed no opinion; but upon consultation among themselves it was ascertained that two of them favored the petition, while three, constituting a majority, were opposed to it. They then separated, and, at the June session made a verbal report, reciting the facts and making no recommendation. They were then discharged, two of them receiving compensation for their services.

It is somewhat remarkable that the petition was at this time surreptitiously abstracted from the Assembly, and has never been returned to the files.

Now for a piece of secret history. At the end of the first day's session of the committee, Mr. Halsey (T. L., Sr.) in some manner received an intimation that two of the members had concluded to vote to recommend the passage of the act prayed for in the petition, two were in opposition to it, and one, whose name need not be disclosed, was in a state of indecision. This latter member had never seen a play, and apparently had no idea, indistinct or otherwise, concerning a theatre. He was as uncouth and ignorant a countryman as ever plodded beside a yoke of oxen, and could comprehend neither argument nor description. He wore a long blue overcoat, with immense side flaps, a high collar, and large buttons, apparently a transmitted heir-loom in his family; and also walked in huge, dusty boots. He had a vote, and to win that, Mr. Halsey bent his mind. He paid court to him, invited him home to dinner at his house on Prospect Hill, and put everything the place afforded at the service of the abashed representative. The family and the servants were instructed to demean themselves with the utmost deference, while Mr. Halsey himself lost no opportunity of waiting upon his guest, and showing how fully he appreciated the distinction conferred upon his house by a visit from a member of the legislature. After dinner the representative said he must go; but that was now impossible, for

the young ladies, who readily aided their father in his scheme to save the theatre, had conceived such an affection for him that he must needs remain and hear them sing. "Did the Squire like music?" "Wa'al, the Squire didn't know," and so the ladies must play; and through an extensive repertory they played and sang, recommending this and that to the taste of their guest. The host was anxious for his opinion on dancing. The Squire had formed none, and so nothing could stay the ladies from executing a *pas de deux* before him. He pronounced it pretty. Another was called for, and then another, until tea was announced. The Squire had now become very uneasy, and evidently wanted to change the scene, but did not know how to get away; and when he tried to signify that he supposed it was time he was getting along to his boarding-house on Christian Hill, he perceived that the announcement caused the family such grief, that he yielded a consent to remain to tea. Once seated at the board, he was served with everything that was at hand, diligent pains being taken to find viands to his liking. During the evening all contributed to entertain him at the same time losing no opportunity of obtaining on all subjects the opinions of one who assisted in making laws for the State. Mr. Halsey brought up certain questions and asked instructions in regard to them. It was surprising how completely in unison were Mr. Halsey's views with his on almost every point; and on the subject of the theatre it was soon apparent that the representative, although he would not commit himself as to the course he should pursue, intended to make no very vigorous opposition in committee to the side favored by his entertainer.

Night at length came, when another movement was made for Christian Hill, and the same difficulty was experienced in doing violence to the expectations of the family that the Squire should lodge with them. It was evident that they had set their hearts upon it, and he had not the strength to resist. The procession to the bed-chamber was imposing. Two servants led the way with the candles (tall spermaceti candles they were, in silver candlesticks), while the host and the man whom the host delighted to honor, followed. "This is your room, Squire," said Mr. Halsey, as they entered the northeast chamber, its stately and sumptuous aspect at once

bewildering and subduing the Squire. On each side of an immense mirror were sconces, every branch bearing a tall candle lighted, while the bed with its heavy carving, its cambric pillow-cases, and its dainty Marseilles counterpane stood ready to receive the weary guest. He was shown a bell, and besought to ring it if he should have need for anything, and then all withdrew. The door was closed, and the dazed Squire sank upon a chair, and helplessly stared at the surrounding grandeur. Long he sat, and made no motion. He knew that he was a legislator, a man of great influence, and the superior of his entertainer, but he was crushed with the homage. He was encumbered with no luggage, but his mere presence burdened him beyond relief. The night was far advanced, and he was still sitting. At last with an effort he rose, turned down the counterpane, divested himself of his coat and boots, and, with the candles all ablaze lay down, waiting for the morning, and big with a purpose.

As soon as the first streaks of day were visible from the east window he donned his coat, cautiously opened the door, and with the boots in his hand began creeping down stairs. He reached the bottom without discovery, although those stairs creaked as they never did in honest daylight, and was just slipping the bolt of the outer door, when Mr. Halsey suddenly joined him with a hearty greeting, delighted to find the Squire, like himself, an early riser. "We'll take a walk together, Squire. I want to show you our country about here." "I'm going home." "Oh, not until after breakfast, I hope; the ladies would be so much distressed." "I'm going home now," repeated the Squire, with such firmness that Mr. Halsey no longer resisted, but, shaking hands with him, bade him remember that whenever he came to town the Halsey house was to be his home. He then watched the Squire turn down Olney's lane with his boots still in his hands. Whether he put them on before reaching Christian Hill is not known. Mr. Halsey extinguished the candles, and broke the intelligence to his family that they should that morning breakfast alone. He soon afterwards learned that when the vote was taken in the committee, the idol of his family had proved a staunch friend of the theatre.

It has often been stated, and is now the prevailing opinion, that no legislation ever took place in relation to the subject



of the petition ; and, as the schedules for that year and those succeeding, contain no enactment concerning theatrical exhibitions, such is the natural conclusion. A search of the Journals of the House of Representatives and of the Senate, however, brings to light some interesting disclosures. We find that on the 27th of February, 1813, a law was enacted, having passed both houses on that day, and was engrossed at length on the Journal of the lower House. The original draught of the act with the official file marks thereon is in preservation in the office of the Secretary of State, and by inspection of it we are enabled to learn its history, and to form a satisfactory theory touching the cause of the suppression of the act after its passage.

It was at first entitled, "An Act prohibiting Theatrical Exhibitions," and contained three sections. The first briefly and peremptorily prohibited theatrical performances within the State ; the second prescribed the penalties to be incurred by the violation of the first ; and the last consisted of a long provision of involved construction, excepting the Providence theatre from the operation of the law, upon certain specified contingencies. The act was intended to have especial reference to the Providence theatre, and its framers, having discovered in the preceding year that there was but little prospect of its adoption, cut out its more obnoxious parts, and then presented it, thus changed, at the February session of the year 1813. These changes completely altered its tenor. The title and the two prohibitory sections were stricken out, and over them was wafered a paper containing in another hand the amendments. These consisted of a new title and two sections. Section one empowered the town councils of the several towns to license, regulate, and, as they should find expedient, prohibit and suppress theatrical performances. Section two prescribed the penalties to be visited upon those who should give or permit such divertisements, unlicensed by the town council. Section three, retained from the original draught, ran as follows :

" Provided, nevertheless, that three judicious and impartial men shall be appointed by the town-council of the town of Providence to appraise and set upon the present theatre in said town and the lot whereon it stands, the full valuation it would bear if this act had not been passed, which valuation they shall report to said council, and shall give notice

thereof to the proprietors of said theatre; and in case no person or persons shall present [themselves] within sixty days to purchase said theatre and lot, and shall make and execute to said proprietors, and deposit in the hands of said appraisers for the benefit of said proprietors, a good and sufficient bond or bonds to the satisfaction of the appraisers, stipulating therein to purchase and pay for said property at a full and a fair price and valuation, or in case (said bond or bonds being executed as aforesaid) the proprietors shall make and execute and deposit in the hands of said appraisers within ten days after notice to them of the deposit of said bonds as aforesaid a good and sufficient deed, or deeds, as aforesaid of their right, title, and interest in said theatre, or in said lot, or both at their option, to be delivered to said purchaser or purchasers upon payment by them to the appraisers at the price at which said property shall be valued, or (being dissatisfied with said valuation, and prosecuting said bond or bonds for the purpose of obtaining a further valuation by a jury,) shall within ten days after the verdict of one jury, and judgment thereon, make, execute, and deposit such deed or deeds as aforesaid to the person, or persons signing said bond, and if the price and amount of compensation for said property so ascertained shall not be paid into the hands of said appraisers for the benefit of said proprietors within sixty days after the deposit of said deed or deeds in either case as aforesaid, then and in either of the before stated cases the provisions of this act shall not be extended to theatrical exhibitions in said theatre in the town of Providence, nor shall anything in this act contained be construed to prohibit or suppress the same."

Another section enabled guardians and trustees of such stockholders as might be *non compotes mentis*, or under age, to make valid deeds in their names.

Such was the act after amendment, and when it became a law. There can be no doubt of its passage. It bears the file marks of both Houses; it is engrossed at length upon the Journal of the lower House; its enactment was announced at the close of the session in one of the local newspapers; and the town council of Providence promptly proceeded to act in accordance with its provisions.

At a meeting of the council held March 22d, three gentlemen were appointed a committee of appraisement, all of whom declined serving in that capacity. The next week another committee, consisting of Messrs. Jonathan Adams, John Howland, and William Church, were nominated in their place, and on the 26th of the succeeding month they made a report, in which they stated that they had appraised the theatre and the lot on which it stood at seven thousand dollars, estimating the value of the building at five thousand six hundred dollars, and that of the lot at fourteen hundred dollars. Their labors then ended. What action may have been subsequently taken by others can not now be ascertained.

The theory offered to account for the omission of this act from the schedules published by public authority is, that Mr. Eddy, the Secretary of State, whose duty it was to prepare the legislative enactments for publication, had personal knowledge that the provisions of the third section upon the fulfilment of which the vitality of the act depended, had not been complied with, because no purchaser had appeared within the stipulated time to buy the theatre at its appraised value, and, supposing the statute thereby virtually repealed, did not deem it necessary to include it among the other acts of that session, which made their appearance under his supervision in the month of October following.

The law thus made, and thus suppressed, became a dead letter, but was destined to be resuscitated. In February, 1820, the General Assembly appointed Samuel Eddy, together with the Secretary and Attorney General, a committee to digest the laws of the State, and to propose such alterations as they should deem proper. In 1821, at the January session, Governor Knight, James Fenner, and Thomas Burgess, the last of whom had in 1813 been clerk of the House of Representatives, and therefore as well as Mr. Eddy cognizant of the passage of the act, were added to this committee, and the digest prepared by them appeared in 1822, in which volume the resurrected act appears, shorn of its third section, and with a marginal note, thus : " 1813-22."

## CHAPTER VI.

1812.

PANORAMIC VIEW OF PROVIDENCE—ENGAGEMENT OF GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE—HIS SUCCESS IN OTHER THEATRES—A THUNDER STORM THINS THE AUDIENCE—ANECDOTE OF THOMAS L. HALSEY—ANECDOTES OF COOKE—HIS DEATH—HIS CHARACTER—PHILLIPS'S EULOGY.

THE year 1812 marks an era in the history of the Providence theatre. That year was made memorable by the appearance on its boards of no less a personage than the illustrious GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE, an actor of transcendent genius, second to none, and equalled by only one, David Garrick. Impelled by his erratic genius, he who had played before the Majesty of England, and been the admiration of the nobility—he, in whose train artists and critics were proud to follow—had left the scene of his triumphs, and had come to our western shores. Now after winning new laurels in all the American cities he came to this little town to interpret the words of Shakespeare, and to brighten its historic page. By this event, the people of Providence were enabled to witness as fine acting as the world has ever enjoyed, and then the name of their town became forever associated with the records of the drama; for in this obscure corner George Frederick Cooke played his last part. In many a place to which the fame of our local worthies, fondly perpetuated by us, can never penetrate—wherever our noble English drama is studied and the names of its great lights are cherished—Providence is a name well remembered for the distinction it thus received.

The dramatic season commenced on the 29th of June, with the performance of the romantic and affecting play, entitled "Lovers' Vows." The company comprised, besides the managers, Messrs. Young, Waring, Clark, Drake, Robertson,

Spiller, Barnes, and Entwistle, Mesdames Powell, Young, Barnes, and Drake, Miss Dillinger, and others.

On the 8th of July a new act-drop, which had recently been painted by the best scenic artist of the day, Mr. War-rall, from drawings made by him two or three years before, was exhibited for the first time. It was a panoramic representation of the town of Providence, as viewed from the old fort on Federal Hill, near the junction of Atwell's avenue and Broadway, and included the space between Meeting street on the north, and Wickenden street on the south. Its mechanical execution is excellent, all the buildings represented upon it being painted with scrupulous fidelity. This curtain was for a year or two displayed two or three times a season as a part of the entertainments, but was finally appropriated to its legitimate purpose. It is still in a tolerable state of preservation, and is the property of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

On the 13th of July Cooke made his first appearance in Providence. He and Mrs. Cooke left New York by the Providence packet on the 5th of July, and arrived here on the 8th. His fame had preceded him. He had arrived in New York from England, on the 16th of November, 1810, and made his *débüt* in America in the character of *Richard III.* The excitement among the citizens was intense. The throng about the theatre was so dense and pressing that many were forced through the doors without payment. On his entrance he was welcomed by twenty-two hundred spectators with thunders of applause; and the performance excited the wildest enthusiasm, more than gratifying every expectation. He played seventeen nights, and the receipts of the managers were twenty-one thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars.

He played in Boston and Baltimore with similar success; but in Philadelphia the citizens were almost frantic in their eagerness to see him. On the Saturday before his appearance the streets around the theatre were densely blocked by people struggling to reach the box-office to secure tickets; some of whom had spent the whole of the preceding night near the portico in order to be the earliest on the ground when the office should be opened. He began his engagement March 25, 1811, as *Richard III.* The ticket-holders were

obliged to be taken through the back entrance of the theatre, over the stage to their seats, as the crowd in front rendered access by the usual way impracticable.

He made several visits to New York, and in January, 1812, he played a second engagement in Boston, where the rage for seeing him was so great, that, though the weather was exceedingly cold, the box-office was surrounded from three o'clock in the morning until ten, the hour at which the sale of tickets began. It is said that during one of these Boston engagements a Providence boy, excited by the reports of those who had witnessed the acting of Cooke, and fearing that he would never visit Providence, walked to Boston for want of the means to travel by the usual conveyance, and then beheld the renowned actor, and felt himself compensated for his pains. The delirium of his delight when Cooke actually came to Providence can only be appreciated by those who had the luck to witness the impersonations of that wonderful genius.

Mr. Cooke opened on Monday, July 13th, as *Shylock* in "The Merchant of Venice," to a house of \$268.50. On Wednesday, the 15th, he played *Richard III.*, a part that he had wrested from John Philip Kemble, to a house of \$286.00. On Friday, the 17th, *Sir Pertinax McSycophant* in "The Man of the World," to \$227.50; on Monday, the 20th, *Macbeth*, to \$259.00; on Wednesday, the 22d, *Penruddock* in "The Wheel of Fortune," to \$165.75; on Friday, the 24th, *Zanga* in the "Revenge," and *Sir Archy McSarcasam* in "Love a la Mode," to \$198.00. This was the last night of his engagement, but he was reëngaged for three additional nights. On Monday, the 27th, he played *Lear* to \$157.00; on Wednesday, the 29th, *Falstaff* in "Henry IV.," to \$93.50; and on Friday, the 31st, for his own benefit, *Sir Giles Overreach* in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," to \$285.00.

The sums given above as the receipts of each night, are the takings at the box-office for tickets promiscuously sold, but it is to be recollected that many of the best seats were occupied by the stockholders, who, according to the conditions of the lease, paid no admission fee. The audiences, it will thus be perceived, were therefore larger than the receipts alone would indicate.

Cooke's engagement at this time was to share equally after one hundred and fifty dollars, and to have a clear benefit. So these nine nights yielded him five hundred and fifty dollars, a very large sum considering the population of the town, many of whom were not play-goers. This was to have been his last engagement prior to leaving for England.

It will be observed that there was a remarkable falling off in the receipts on the 29th of July, when *Falstaff* was played. He had undertaken the character to oblige his friend Colonel Blodget, and on the evening in question, before the rising of the curtain, there occurred a violent thunder-storm, and very few had gathered to witness the performance. Mr. Cooke looked at the empty boxes, and then, addressing the manager, said, "What shall we do—postpone the play?" "Oh, no; that is not according to the rule of the Boston theatre; we always play; good houses, or poor houses," was the reply. "Why," said Cooke, "there are not twenty dollars in!" "The Boston theatre has been opened, and the whole performance given, when there were only nine dollars in the house," replied the manager. "Well, then, we will play," said Cooke. Before the curtain went up the house was pretty well filled, for Mat. Williams's hack, the only public vehicle that Providence then possessed, had made repeated calls at the theatre, delivering each time a load of eager occupants.<sup>1</sup>

Cooke's *Falstaff* was far from being his best impersonation, yet in many respects it was delightfully unctuous. An expression of Mr. Harwood, the box-keeper, in his admiration of his acting, obtained currency, because recognized as apposite. In the passage where *Falstaff* recounts his prodigious deeds of daring, and exaggerates the number of his assailants until the *Prince*, unable to endure his shameless mendacity, reveals the truth, Cooke, thus caught, instantly replies: "By the Lord, Harry, I knew ye," etc. As he begins the remark he laughs, and Mr. Harwood used to protest that he saw the laugh come rippling into sight at his ankles, and then spread up over his body until his face was all ablaze with drollery, and his frame shaking like jelly. "I saw his ankles laugh," said Harwood.

<sup>1</sup> Clapp's Record of the Boston Stage.

S. S. Southworth, the veteran journalist, has recorded the following incident, which occurred at this time. One of the most honored citizens of the town was Thomas Lloyd Halsey, a man of large fortune, of irascible temperament, and great fondness for theatrical entertainments. He had always been a patron of the theatre, and had supported it with his influence and his purse. His vigorous action in its defence, when its enemies were urging their petition for its suppression made him particularly conspicuous, and of his adroit management of legislative committees, when the interests of the drama were at stake, an illustration has been already given. On the night when Cooke was playing *Sir Giles Overreach*—at that point where he is overwhelmed by the production of the forged parchment—Mr. Halsey became so excited that he involuntarily rose from his seat, and ejaculated in the presence of a crowded audience, "Throttle the damned infamous villain!" to the amazement and horror of the whole assembly.

This outburst of such an impulsive person as Mr. Halsey, is to be regarded as strong testimony to the genius of the matchless Cooke, whose personations of the malignant passions have never been equalled. His representation of the infernal craft of the super-subtle *Iago*, once procured for him similar testimony; for such was the profound dissimulation and treachery he manifested in his rendition of the character, that he excited a hiss, which, considering its cause, was the highest compliment that could be awarded.

Mr. Cooke regularly attended to his professional duties during his stay in Providence; and never played better in his life; his efforts here surpassing those at Boston. Although he lived a considerable distance from the theatre, on Benefit street, at the Golden Ball Inn, now known as the Mansion House, he walked to and from it every morning, and on the evenings of performance, and never missed a rehearsal, or disappointed the audience. Every day as he came down Thomas street on his way across the river, he stopped at Thurber's, near the foot of the street, to regale himself with oysters. At about nine o'clock in the morning he called at the post-office and spent half an hour chatting with Mr. Gabriel Allen, who was then acting as postmaster. Wherever he moved he was followed by curious eyes, being as much



an object of general interest as President Monroe became, when he visited the town five years later.

Many persons who were living until quite recently, spoke with enthusiasm of the genius of this wonderful man, who not only astonished by the brilliancy of his talents, but delighted by the clearness of his articulation. His pronunciation of the English language was faultless, and it used to be said that none could appreciate the beauties of the language until he heard it from the lips of Cooke; while his acting was of such excellence that the efforts of the vaunted prodigies who succeeded him were barely tolerable in comparison with his. But it was his eminence in elocution, more than his fame as an actor, that drew to the theatre during his engagement all of the bar, the rector of the church, and the pastors of several of the other religious societies of the town, one of the most able of whom afterwards forsook his former vocation, and became a prompter in a New York theatre. There were some other persons present, who had never before witnessed the performance of a play. Amos M. Atwell took his son, Samuel Y., then a young lad, but in after years distinguished as a lawyer, to every one of Cooke's performances, and when certain acquaintances remonstrated with him for adopting a course so likely, as they said, to create a taste for such an absorbing and deleterious amusement, he answered that it was for the purpose of giving his son a permanent distaste for the stage that he treated him in this unusual manner: "for," said he, "after the boy has seen Cooke he never will endure second-rate acting—his theatre days will then be over."

It has been related that the managers used stratagems to keep Cooke in a fit condition to perform, and that once when they had locked him in his room at the inn to prevent him from obtaining the means of intoxication, he outwitted them by bribing a servant to bring him a bowl of punch and a straw, and with the straw sucked the liquor through the key-hole, thus solacing himself for the inconvenience of his imprisonment. But slight credence can be given to the story, inasmuch as it has been related of others, and as it was inconsistent with the violent temper of Cooke to brook restraint.

A mistaken impression has prevailed that he was an habitual drunkard ; but the truth is, that he was accustomed to abstain for months at a time from intoxicating liquors, and then to indulge for a few days in riotous excess. When he came to Providence he had just partially recovered from a severe attack of the liver disease, and dropsical symptoms had begun to manifest themselves. He was, therefore, following a regimen dictated by prudence, and not until the close of his engagement did he make the slightest departure from it. He then went to Boston for a few days, but soon returned to Providence, where he fell into the society of certain convivial spirits, and was again seduced into intemperate habits. It ought, perhaps, to be stated that on one of the nights of performance he had made such a lapse from the abstemious course he had determined upon, that when he went to the theatre it appeared doubtful whether he would be capable of going through with the play ; but though reeling when off the stage, as soon as he showed himself in the scene all traces of intoxication vanished, and he became master of himself, and of all the passions that sway mankind.

After his return from Boston he was frequently seen in lamentable plight, staggering in the streets, or resting upon house-steps. One of his haunts was Esek Eddy's bowling saloon, which, situated at the back of the Cove, was a place of general resort, and here he occasionally procured the means of exhilaration. One afternoon while there he became so far overcome with liquor as to be scarcely able to walk, but he managed without assistance to reach a point in Thomas street where Noah Smith had a wheelwright's shop, a little east of North Main street. Mr. Smith was at work upon the body of a carriage then resting upon saw-benches standing on the sidewalk. When Mr. Cooke gained this spot he sat upon the end of one of the benches to rest himself, but the fumes of the liquor, mounting to his head, stupefied him, and he fell upon the ground. Mr. Smith hastened to his assistance, and helping him to rise, led him to the inn.

This imprudent mode of life made sad havoc with his health, and very soon his dropsical symptoms increased to such an alarming degree that it was feared he could not survive a removal to New York, where his wife's kindred lived. He was, however, removed thither, but death soon

ensued. He breathed his last on the 26th of September, 1812, in the sixty-second year of his age.

His remains were deposited in the Stranger's Vault of St. Paul's church-yard. When Edmund Kean was in this country he was pained to find that no monument had been erected to the memory of the departed genius, and he accordingly determined to erect one. The monument was finished on the 4th of June, 1821, and placed over the remains which had been removed to a suitable spot in the burial-ground on the corner of Broadway and Vesey street. It is a work of durability and taste, and bears the following inscription :

*"Erected to the memory of*  
**GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE,**  
 BY EDMUND KEAN, OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,  
 1821.

Three kingdoms claim his birth,  
 Both Hemispheres pronounce his worth."

Mr. Cooke was about five feet ten inches in height, and scrupulously neat in his dress. His manners were dignified, self-possessed, and courteous. His nose was prominent, in shape between the aquiline and the Roman; his eyes were full, brilliant, and satirical in expression; and his complexion singularly clear and beautiful. He wore when in Providence, a blue coat with gold buttons, breeches, and top boots, his hair being powdered and worn in a queue. No one would suppose from his appearance that he had any proclivity for indulgence in intoxicating liquors; but would set him down as a precise, well-bred "gentleman of the old school." In society he was affable, and his conversation gave evidence of excellent judgment, and a well-stored mind. At those intervals when he gave way to his only vice he never lost his precise air, though he became overbearing in his assumption of superiority, and occasionally fierce in his vituperations. At such times, in the very tempest and whirlwind of his passion, he never evinced any malignity, but, on the contrary, by some chance expression, gave indisputable evidence of a noble nature. It is related that once after receiving £400 in bank notes, he thrust the whole amount into the fire in order to put himself on a level to fight a man, in a pot-house

row, who had said that Cooke provoked him to battle because he was rich and the other poor!

One of his most striking peculiarities was his indifference to the results of his caprices. While never condescending to propitiate his audiences, he not unfrequently treated them with open contempt. During his stay in Providence it appearing probable that he intended to neglect the performance on one occasion for another occupation, two of the most prominent of the citizens called on him and urged him to keep his engagement, if only out of regard to them, they being as they sought to impress upon his mind, the "nobility" of Providence. At this announcement the tragedian became exasperated, and returned such an answer that the ambassadors beat a precipitate retreat, carrying with them the conviction that Cooke was a low fellow, unable to comprehend the delicacy of gentle-folk. This answer wicked people of the baser sort have not yet forgotten.

When in Boston he once indulged his capricious mood and kept his audience waiting until their patience was nigh exhausted. The managers humbly suggested that the cream of Boston society were waiting his pleasure. "Let them wait," said he with a contemptuous sneer, "I've made the KING OF ENGLAND wait!"

During one of his early appearances in New York, he is said, being elated, to have refused to act till the orchestra had played "God save the King"; and then insisted with tipsy gravity that the audience should be "upstanding."<sup>1</sup>

When playing an engagement in Liverpool, he was called on to offer an apology for some offence on the stage. Liverpool merchants had much fattened then by a fortunate pushing of the trade in human flesh. "Apology! from George Frederick Cooke!" he cried; "take it from this remark: There's not a brick in your infernal town which is not cemented by the blood of a slave!"<sup>1</sup>

To the actors who supported him in his renditions he was ever courteous, his conduct in this regard being in charming contrast to the insolent demeanor of Cooper, and of many other of the stars, who in return for certain pelf deign to exhibit their glory in provincial theatres.

The late Edward Simpson, who had no friendship for him,

<sup>1</sup> Dunlap's Annals of the English Stage.

said that he never saw him vexed with an actor but once. He had been, after many importunities, induced to play *Hamlet*, a character for which he certainly was not fitted, and in assenting he made a positive stipulation that the *Ghost* should be sustained by an old stager, named Chapman, in whom he had great confidence. "My success in the part," said Cooke, "depends on the correctness of the *Ghost*, and Chapman is my man." Chapman was what is called "a conscientious actor," and he was delighted when he was informed that the *Ghost* had been entrusted to him at Cooke's especial instance. Such a compliment he could not estimate too highly, and he resolved to make the part realize Cooke's expectations. At rehearsal he appeared "letter-perfect," and received his instructions with profound deference; and when the night came for him to immortalize himself he was unusually attentive to business. Being somewhat advanced in years, he wore spectacles; and when the cue was given for his entrance he was standing at the wings, spectacles on nose, looking over his part. Responding at once, he presented himself in spectacles to the horror of *Hamlet*, and amid deafening peals of laughter from the audience. A ghost in spectacles! Cooke lost all patience, denounced the unlucky and confounded actor, and vowed he never would attempt *Hamlet* again.

Every one must abhor the vice to which Mr. Cooke was addicted. It was indeed a grievous fault, and has furnished a subject on which the opponents of the stage delight to dwell, while they forget to touch upon his lavish charities, and to relate how the greater portion of his large income was distributed among the sick and needy; yet those who are acquainted with the incidents of his life, can suggest circumstances which palliate the offence, and turn indignation into pity. Mr. Cooke's parents deeply resented his adopting the stage as a profession, and died without forgiving him, excluding him from his little patrimony. Opinions may differ as to the amount of constraint parents may rightfully use in controlling their children's choice of a profession, but none can justify that unrelenting spirit which his parents showed in not pardoning their child's opposition to their preferences when it had led him to eminence, and when after years of successful toil he had found no cause to repent his course.

By their harshness his sensibilities were deeply wounded, his hopes of happiness were dissipated; he reproached himself for unfilial conduct, and when he could no longer hope for reconciliation with his estranged parents, he resorted to the wine-cup for Lethean draughts.

He despised himself for his weakness, and filled his diary with humiliating confessions. The recollection of the improprieties he committed when intoxicated was always present to him, and shame made him avoid society, and plunge deeper into ruin. Had he faithful friends he might have been rescued; but he knew not the sweets of friendship. Although surrounded by flatterers, and a frequent guest at the tables of the rich, he had sufficient penetration to discriminate between friendship and ephemeral popularity which he derived from the display of his histrionic abilities. Travelling from city to city, and from country to country, he had no settled home, and his isolated position as an actor also militated against the cultivation of the social relations. Thus alone in the world, he had ample opportunity for bitter reflections, and, when these became too oppressive, wine came to his relief.

While Mr. Cooke was in this country a number of portraits of him were painted, one by Stuart in Boston, and several by Dunlap; but the finest of all was painted by Sully, representing him as *Richard III.* It now adorns the Philadelphia Academy, and is not only a truthful portrait of the great actor, but an excellent Shakspearian illustration.

The late Mr. C. Leslie when an unknown lad in Philadelphia, attracted attention to his own talents by the surprising readiness with which he caught the likeness of Cooke, as he was playing the characters of *Richard*, and *Sir Pertinax McSycophant* in that city. His spirited drawings gave such promise of future attainments, that a number of gentlemen contributed to send him for competent instruction to England, where he rose to distinction. Several engravings were made of the portraits, and for many years after the death of Mr. Cooke were hanging upon the walls of the citizens of Providence.

The great talents of Mr. Cooke were undoubted, and when he shook off the debasing habits that sometimes clouded his excellence, he commanded the admiration of all the critics,

and was attended by all the *literati* of the day. Wherever he played he won victorious wreaths, and his path was bright with glory. Volumes might be filled with adulatory lines addressed to him, but no one more feelingly recites his praises than Phillips in his *Emerald Isle* :

“The rival muses owned the alternate reign,  
With mutual feelings each their feuds forsook,  
Combined their efforts, and created Cooke.  
Pure child of Nature! foster child of Art!  
How all the passions in succession rise,  
Heave in thy soul, and lighten in thine eyes!  
Beguiled by thee, old Time with aspect blythe,  
Leans on his sceptre, and forgets his scythe;  
Space yields its distance, ancient glories live,  
Ages elapse, remotest scenes revive—  
For thee creation half inverts his reign,  
And captive reason wears a willing chain.”

## CHAPTER VII.

1812-1816.

THE PRODUCTION OF CINDERELLA—A MELANCHOLY INCIDENT OCCASIONS GREAT SCANDAL—REAPPEARANCE OF MRS. WHITLOCK—MR. ENTWISTLE IN YORKSHIRE CHARACTERS—BENEFIT OF MRS. BARNES—THE INTERIOR OF THE THEATRE DECORATED—MR. AND MRS. DUFF—REAPPEARANCE OF COOPER—ANECDOTE OF "RULE A WIFE AND HAVE A WIFE"—COOPER'S RETIREMENT FROM THE STAGE—THE GREAT GALE—ANECDOTE OF MR. LEGG—MR. AND MRS. YOUNG—MR. AND MRS. POWELL—JAMES A. DICKSON.

AFTER the departure of Mr. Cooke the managers were put to their wits to devise some novelty unusually attractive, that the attendance at the theatre might not diminish. They had peculiar disadvantages to combat; for the last engagement, though perfectly successful, had exhausted the resources of the humbler patrons of the theatre, while the richer citizens, after enjoying the brilliant personations of a "mighty actor," were but little inclined to attend performances which would now seem mean and contemptible. Still farther, the whole community was saddened by the recent declaration of war between England and the United States, and every one felt averse to public amusements of any kind. The news of that event had reached Providence near the close of Cooke's engagement, and the attendance at the theatre was perceptibly diminished. The war was not popular in this town. The bells were tolled, other demonstrations of sorrow were made, and every countenance wore an expression of grief. The 23d of July, 1813, was by recommendation of the legislature of the State, observed as a public fast day.

At such a crisis nothing could be so remunerative as a spectacle. Accordingly a pantomimic show-piece, founded on the nursery tale of "Cinderella," was produced with much attention to stage appointments and scenic effects, and it



realized the expectations of the managers, drawing nearly all the families of the town to the exhibition.

During this eventful season, and while as yet the embers of hostility to the theatre were aglow, there occurred a melancholy incident, fraught with misery to a peaceful home, and kindling a new but transient indignation against actors and plays. An actor of decided merit who had recently arrived from England, and had made his first appearance on our stage on the opening night of the season in the character of *Fred-erick*, in "Lovers' Vows," had succeeded in enticing a young girl, the daughter of a respectable citizen, from her home, and had clandestinely married her. He was about six and twenty years of age, of graceful person, and fascinating address. With his flattering tongue he made rapid advances, and found an easy victim in one who at his first approach was charmed, and became powerless to repel his advances. A brief courtship was succeeded by a flight into an adjoining state, and a marriage. Almost immediately after this marriage he neglected to provide for his wife the ordinary necessities of life, treated her with coldness and cruelty, and exasperated her beyond endurance by his shameless infidelities. He had the hardihood to play before an audience incensed by his conduct. The public resentment was so manifest that he was discharged from the theatre; but for want of means he was unable to remove from town until the end of the dramatic season, when, assisted by one or two of the company, he gave a public entertainment, and then disappeared. His unhappy wife returned to her friends; a divorce was easily procured, and then this blighted young creature remained years buried in seclusion. She at length listened to the proposals of another and more honorable suitor, and marrying a second time, removed to Charleston, South Carolina. She had resided in her new home but a brief period, when her betrayer made his appearance in that place, and married again, first having engaged in a duel with Mr. Charles Young, whose wife he had insulted. The incident of meeting him in this remote part of the country, where she and her husband had taken refuge in the hope of finding that repose and retirement which both of them earnestly desired, produced a melancholy depression, which finally consigned her to the grave. It was afterwards discovered that her heartless destroyer had

run the same career in England, and that he had there abandoned three wives before coming to America. It is related that these deserted women all came to America, and that the three on one occasion by some accident, were brought into each other's society.

The extraordinary baseness of this one delinquent was long remembered in Providence, and operated to the detriment of the whole theatrical profession. His wickedness, great enough in reality, was exaggerated, and by many believed to be the inseparable characteristic of all actors. The unthinking multitude forgot the unblemished reputation of those who had long adorned their stage, and been examples of all public and private virtues, and indulged in violent invectives against all who were connected with the theatre. Even yet there lingers among the ignorant some suspicions of the players, and though no one institution in our midst had borne a more honorable record than the theatre, yet let some obscure actor make a false step, and numbers are ready to bruit it abroad, and visit retribution on all his associates. Let the same retribution be visited upon any other profession, and is there one that could bear the light?

The season of 1813 began on the 4th of July. The additions to the company were Messrs. Cleary, Johnson, and McFarland, with Mesdames Wheatley and McFarland. On the 12th, Mrs. Whitlock, who had been engaged for three nights, opened as *Widow Cheerly*. She had lately returned from England, and was making a tour through all the theatres of the country. The critics thought that she had much improved since her former visit to America. She had become very large, but in spite of her corpulence had sufficient talent to force admiration of her acting from every spectator. On her second night the entertainments were under the patronage of a number of literary gentlemen of the town, on which occasion she played *Lady Macbeth* to the *Macbeth* of Mr. Cleary, recited Collins's ode, "The Passions," and performed *Catherine* to Mr. Young's *Petruchio*. She remained a fourth night, appearing as *Elvira* for her own benefit.

After her departure the company depended upon their own exertions in standard plays. Mr. Entwistle appeared to much advantage as *Farmer Oldfield*, in "Speed the Plow." He was admired in all Yorkshire characters, but his masterpiece was

*Tyke*, in "The School of Reform." It was a splendid piece of acting, and one which has never been surpassed. Mrs. Duff, a very competent judge of playing, used to say that she would at any time walk five miles to witness his personation of the character.

Mrs. Barnes's benefit on the 16th of August, proved very remunerative. She had seen much affliction during the year, having lost both her husband and her father, the old favorite of the Providence theatre, Mr. Bates. She undertook the maintenance of her young brother, and was entirely dependent for support on her earnings as an actress. These circumstances awakened general sympathy in her behalf, and called to the theatre a numerous assemblage on the night set apart for her benefit.

Early in the summer of 1814, Mr. Warrall was sent here to decorate the theatre. Under his directions the embellishment was completed in season for the opening night. Over the proscenium was an Ionic entablature, the freize adorned with a gold scroll ornament. On the centre, resting on a tablet, were the sterns of three ships, viz. : the *Independence*, supported by the *United States* on the right, and the *Constitution* on the left. The motto on this tablet was : "To hold the Mirror up to Nature." From this hung a crimson curtain with gold fringe and tassels. The ceiling of the proscenium was divided into panels of purple and gold. The dados around the upper tier of boxes was adorned with three tablets ; those on the right and left contained representations of vessels which had signalized themselves ; the *Wasp*, the *Hornet*, the *Enterprise*, and the *Peacock* ; that in the centre contained the *Lawrence*, the *Niagara*, and the *Caledonia*. Rostrated columns bore the names of Hull, Decatur, Bainbridge, Lawrence, Jones, Burrows, Washington, and Perry.

The stage was lighted by a new set of brass lamps with globe glasses, which gave brilliancy of effect, and were a security against accident. Many of the scenes were entirely new, being the work of Mr. Warrall.

At this time that class of plays now contemptuously stigmatized as "contemporaneous dramas" was in vogue, and every important event was dramatized, and at once produced upon the stage. The victories of the Americans over the British forces afforded subjects for many plays, and during

each season two or three of these novelties were presented to the public. The patriotic piece of this season was the "Heroes of the Lake," written to celebrate Commodore Perry's victory on Lake Erie.

The company consisted of Messrs. Young, Dixon, Bray, Hughes, Stockwell, Legg, W. Jones, Gardner, Savage, J. Jones, and Fennell, Jr.; also Mesdames Powell, Young, Mills, Bray, Barnes, and Hughes, Miss White, (who soon became Mrs. Savage), and Miss Stockwell (who afterwards became Mrs. George H. Barrett).

The star of the season was Duff, who opened in the middle of July, and played a series of tragedy heroes until August 5th. His performances were applauded by almost all the play-goers, but people of the most correct taste preferred to see him in comedy and farce, for which he was best qualified. As an actor of comedy he was one of the best who has ever trod the American stage, but as a tragedian he was but little above mediocrity.

He had been the leading actor at the Dublin theatre, where he was engaged by Mr. Dickson, and came with Mrs. Duff to Boston in November, 1810. In 1811 he went to Philadelphia, where he became exceedingly popular, his benefits always netting him large sums. He there attracted immense audiences in "Three and the Deuce," which was played as a first piece, and soon became the most profitable actor that any theatre could engage. He travelled through the United States as a star, but did not accumulate so much money as he might have done had he remained in Philadelphia. He became subject to attacks of gout, which sometimes confined him for many weeks to the house. He was extravagant in his habits, and too much disposed to conviviality. On his visits to Providence he made his home at the Messer place, on Cranston street. He died in 1831.

Mrs. Duff was one of the most beautiful women that ever appeared upon the stage, and she was equally conspicuous for her talents. Her maiden name was Dyke, and she and her sister had been dancers at the Dublin theatre. This sister married the celebrated Thomas Moore, and the well known song, commencing

"Mary, I believe thee true,"

was addressed to Mrs. Mary Duff.

Mr. Dyke, the father of Mrs. Duff, was a subaltern actor on the Irish stage. He had three daughters; the eldest married Mr. Duff; the youngest married Mr. Murray, of the Edinburgh theatre; the second, Elizabeth, married the poet, Moore. They were all on the stage when young, as dancers, and afterwards as actresses. In both these capacities they were engaged to fill the female parts in the *Amateur Theatricals* of Kilkenny in the years 1809 and 1810, when Moore, then one of the performers (and said to be a good one), became acquainted with them and enamored of Miss E. Dike. These young persons were always under the care of their mother, and their personal characters were irreproachable. Moore married Miss E. Dyke, March 22, 1811.<sup>1</sup>

In her youth she had manifested no inclination for the stage, and entered with but little spirit into the business of the profession. Several years later, however, she astonished every one by throwing off her indifference, and appearing before the audience as an actress of splendid talents.

Her husband's improvidence and frequent excesses occasioned her much uneasiness. She passed days and nights in sorrowing over his derelictions of duty, fearing that in the event of his death there would be no provision for her children, for whose welfare she had ever been tenderly solicitous, nurturing them in the practice of the strictest morality. Stimulated by her maternal affection she bent her energies to the mastery of the most difficult characters, and after severe study showed herself capable of maintaining a high rank in her profession. During the engagement of the great Kean, she played opposite parts with such spirit, that once she divided the applause with him. It is said that he disapproved of the warmth of her personation, and informed her that he was to be the prominent person, whom she was to second, and not seek to equal. Mrs. Duff replied that she should like to oblige him in any other matter, but that the maintenance of herself and her children depended on her professional eminence, and that she felt it her duty to act in such a manner as would best further her interests in this respect. She spared no exertions, and, after her fame had become wide-spread, she travelled through the United States as a

<sup>1</sup> Note to Review on "Memoirs of Thomas Moore," *Quarterly Review*. Reprinted in *Littell's Living Age*, Sept. 7, 1853.

star, visited England, and, in March, 1828, played at Drury Lane theatre. She subsequently returned to this country, and, after she became a widow, retired from the stage, and married a member of the New Orleans bar.

She was an actress whose power lay in her identification with the characters she assumed. She was once performing the part of *Mrs. Haller*, and so deeply was she imbued with the emotions of the repentant wife, that in the last scene, where the interest culminates, she swooned outright, fell upon the stage, and was not able to recover until assistance came to her relief.

The season of 1815 began St. John's Day, June 26th, with "The Foundling of the Forest," the company being enlarged by the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Green. On the 4th of July the decorations and transparencies which had been exhibited in Boston at the Peace celebration, were displayed upon the front of the theatre.

The tragedian Cooper began an engagement July 24th, as *Hamlet*, the principal characters in the play being thus distributed: *King*, Hughes; *Polonius*, Bray; *Horatio*, W. Jones; *Læertes*, Legg; *Rosencrantz*, Fennell, Jr.; *Guildestern*, Savage; *Osric*, Clark; *1st Grave Digger*, Bray; *2nd do.*, J. Jones; *Ghost*, Young; *Queen*, Mrs. Mills; *Ophelia*, Mrs. Young; *Player-queen*, Mrs. Savage. Towards the close of his engagement Mr. Cooper was supported by Mrs. Williams, who had been engaged for four nights, and was an actress of much talent, capable of playing the heroines of tragedy and comedy. For his benefit he personated *Leon* in Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy of "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife."

The selection of this lively, but extremely indelicate comedy was not made by Mr. Cooper. In Providence he had many admirers, and his society was courted by all the prominent families who countenanced the theatre. On one of his off-nights he was the principal guest of a social party, and some of the ladies inquired what play he intended to produce for his benefit. He gallantly answered that they might make the selection. They received the proposition with pleasure, but, being unable to agree in their choice, they at last decided to refer the question to the hostess, Mrs. T., who at once named "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife." After the representation much surprise was expressed at the selection,

as the grossness of the language of the piece gave much offence. Many believed that the lady was familiar with its character, and that it was her favorite play ; but it is more probable that she was completely ignorant of everything concerning it, except its name, and this she flippantly mentioned as it rose in her memory.

Thomas A. Cooper arrived in this country from England, in 1796. and soon became the delight of the American stage, maintaining the highest position as an actor for about thirty years. In his visits to Providence he was always welcomed by large audiences, and was the pet, the idol of the town. He was richly endowed in voice, person, and feature, and possessed all the other qualifications essential to distinguished success upon the stage. *Macbeth* and *Othello* were his best Shakspearean delineations, and his *Damon* has never been equalled by any one except Edwin Forrest. He received immense sums in the exercise of his professional talents, but they were spent in sumptuous living. As old age was stealing upon him he studied no new parts, but confined himself to an unvarying repetition of a few, in which when his genius shone in its meridian brightness, he had won full-handed thunders, and consequently he declined in popular favor. For a while he endeavored to maintain his old position, and to wrest from the audiences that applause which had become his life — his more than daily food ; but at length, with no provision for his declining years, he saw that his day had passed, that new aspirants for dramatic fame were rising on every side, and that he had become an object of commiseration. Then he realized the truth of Doctor Johnson's sounding line :

“ Superfluous lags the veteran of the stage.”

His daughter at this conjuncture married Robert Tyler, son of President Tyler, who procured for him a lucrative office in Philadelphia, from which he was removed by President Polk. By the intercession of some friends he was at length appointed an examiner in the New York custom house, and officiated in that capacity until his death in April, 1849.

The season closed on the 13th of September, with Mrs. Powell's benefit, after which most of the comedians went to Boston.

On the 23d occurred the "great gale." A tornado from the southeast caused the tide to rise to an unprecedented height, and to inundate the streets on the west side of the river, as well as the wharves on both sides. It carried away the great bridge, and extended in Westminster street beyond the theatre. The vessels in the harbor broke from their moorings, and went ashore, at the head of the cove. One of them floated up Weybosset street into Eddy street, and grounded with her bow close to the Webb house, nearly opposite the present Boston store. Nearly five hundred buildings were destroyed, and the loss to the town was estimated at more than a million of dollars. When the water had subsided a ferry afforded means of communication between the two sides of the river until the erection of a new bridge. The novelty of this arrangement gave delight to Mr. Joseph Legg,<sup>1</sup> one of the actors, and he found much pleasure in crossing and recrossing. The first day that the ferry-boat made its trips, he spent all the day in it, to the wonder of the citizens, who were unable to understand how any amusement could be derived from such an occupation.

The gale destroyed the salt-works, near Sabin's Point, a few miles down the river, which had been erected by a company of speculators upon the representations of James Fennell, the celebrated actor. He was a man of splendid physical proportions, and of commanding talents, but was the most visionary of speculators. He had studied law in England, had tried the stage and won a high reputation, when he suddenly took a whim to visit America. In every theatre in which he played he proved exceedingly attractive, but in Philadelphia he attained a degree of popularity resembling adulation. He could easily have acquired a fortune, but his devotion to the wildest projects kept him always poor, and only when destitute of means would he bestow attention upon his profession. He had once visited the Bahamas, and had there seen salt made by solar evaporation. Professing

<sup>1</sup> This Mr. Legg was a young man of much personal beauty, and in light comedy won admiration by his grace and elegant manners. Being possessed of a melodious voice and a fine figure, he became a great favorite with the girls of Providence, and it was said that many of them were hopelessly in love with him. He was attentive to his professional duties, and never presumed on his great popularity. One night when he was advertised in the part of *Doricourt*, he absented himself from the theatre, and the next day his admirers were shocked to hear that he had gone to Boston and there eloped with a young lady of wealth. His marriage proved very unhappy, and Legg after a life of trouble died in Louisiana.



to be familiar with the processes, he succeeded in inducing capitalists to assist him to erect salt-works near New London, and to build vats under his direction near Sabin's Point, about the year 1807. These projects proved unremunerative. Pennell was denounced as an impostor; numerous suits were commenced against him, and he was scarcely free from one jail before he was consigned to another. While in Providence he became engaged to the widow Suzman, a foreigner then residing in the town; involved her property in his schemes, and was dismissed with contumely. He struggled for some time against his misfortunes, still clinging to his salt theories, and finally died in destitution in Philadelphia, on the day when the great gale destroyed his vats.

Mr. and Mrs. Young this season took their farewell of Providence, where they had always been favorites. Mr. Young was finely formed, six feet in height, with full chest, erect carriage, and clear complexion. He was not distinguished for talents, though he was well qualified for many of the characters of melodrama.

His wife was considered by many the most beautiful woman of the day, and counted her admirers by thousands; but her beauty was not of an intellectual kind. She was rather small, well formed, and had a beautiful complexion. Her talents would never have made her conspicuous, but with almost every one her beauty atoned for all her deficiencies. Her husband was exceedingly jealous of her admirers, and his jealousy once involved him in a duel in Charleston, in which he was wounded.

In 1816 theatrical performances were given during the month of July, and two weeks in September. Among the new faces in the company were Messrs. Williams, Pelby and Stamp, and Mrs. Moore, formerly Mrs. Woodham, from the New York and Philadelphia theatres.

During the management of Powell and Dickson the last night of every season was assigned for the benefit of Mrs. Powell. At the close of that of 1816 Mr. Dickson made his first appearance in two years to perform *Sir Peter Teazle*. On this occasion the editor of the *American* made the following remarks:

"Mrs. Powell's claims on the esteem and patronage of the public are universally allowed, and we trust that those who admire her in the walks of private life, will give this evening a solid proof of their willingness to encourage the excellence they have the discernment to discover, and the candour to approve."

Mrs. Powell hardly needed the editorial recommendation to secure a large house, she being too well appreciated for that to be indispensable. Her great ability as an actress, both in comedy and tragedy, was acknowledged by all theatre-goers, while her private character was admired by numerous friends. She was the cherished companion of the wives of the principal citizens, and adorned their drawing-rooms with that grace which was conspicuous on the stage. When in Providence she always attended St. John's Church, and sat either in Colonel Blodget's pew, or that of J. B. Wood, the esteemed banker. On her benefit nights the theatre was usually crowded. In Boston on these occasions the receipts used to exceed a thousand dollars; and here they sometimes reached the sum of five hundred dollars. At the ordinary prices the house could not contain that amount, but gentlemen when purchasing their tickets would pay for them with large bills, refusing to receive change. In this way the receipts were much increased.

Mrs. Powell was born in England in 1774. Her maiden name was Harrison. She was of good family, but, being dependent upon her own exertions, adopted the profession of an actress, and soon attained a respectable position on the stage. She had appeared before George the Third by command, and had often performed second characters to Mrs. Siddons, having made a tour in the provinces in company with her. She was induced to come to the United States by Mr. Charles Powell, and, in 1794 married his brother, Mr. Snelling Powell. She died Dec. 10, 1843, and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, near Boston. She made her first appearance in Boston in 1794. Her husband was of Welsh parentage, and inherited from his father, who was a theatrical manager, a taste for the stage. He came to America in 1793, and, after a few years' experience as an actor, assumed the direction of a theatre in Boston, where by his honorable conduct and generous disposition he obtained an enviable reputation.

James A. Dickson was a man of sterling integrity, and as an actor, a manager, and merchant, was highly esteemed. He had a portly figure, and his graceful movements and distinguished bearing proclaimed him a gentleman. He was born in London in 1744, and, on attaining his majority came to this country with the intention of engaging in commercial pursuits; but, being much praised for his talents for dramatic recitation, he became an actor. He changed his name, for the sake of his relations, to Dickenson, but afterwards resumed his family name. His line of business was "first old man," and in that he excelled. He was scrupulously perfect in the words of his characters, had an excellent taste in costume, and showed himself a complete artist by his faithful attention to the minutest details of personation. After he became a manager he several times visited England to procure theatrical recruits, and it was under his auspices that many well-reputed actors were introduced to the American stage. He retired from the profession as an actor in 1817, but twice reappeared for Mrs. Powell's benefits. He did not abandon the labors of a manager till several years later. He then engaged in mercantile life and accumulated a competency. During his visits to England he used to execute the orders of American merchants, and there took the agency of Day & Martin's blacking.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1817-1827.

MRS. POWELL BECOMES LESSEE OF THE THEATRE—APPEARANCE OF INCLEDON—THE FIRST SATURDAY EVENING PERFORMANCE—THE WEST POINT CADETS ATTEND THE PLAY—DEATH OF MR. BRAY—J. WALLACK—A CALAMITOUS FIRE—EDMUND KEAN IN PROVIDENCE—DIFFICULTIES OF A JOURNEY TO BOSTON—CLARK AND CHARNOCK BECOME LESSEES OF THE THEATRE—DEBUT OF EDWIN FORREST—DEATH OF MARY ANN MCBRIDE—BENEFIT OF MRS. MCBRIDE—SAMUEL J. SMITH—WILLIAM A. CONWAY.

**A**FTER the expiration of the lease held by Powell and Dickson, Mrs. Powell became the lessee, and maintained the theatre for several years, Duff and others acting as managers.

In 1817 and 1818 the theatre remained closed, except for a few nights in the early part of September, when a very good company, the prominent members of which were Mr. and Mrs. Duff, Mr. and Mrs. F. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Drummond, and Messrs. Green, Pelby, and Adamson, profited by the influx of strangers attending the Commencement festivities, and came to Providence.

In the summer of 1818 the celebrated Incledon, assisted by Bianchi Taylor, gave a concert upon its stage. The pieces sung by Incledon were "Washington's Star;" "Encompassed in an Angel's Frame;" "Black-eyed Susan;" "Blow high, blow low;" "Scot's wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled;" "Sailor's Last Whistle;" "Quaker Song," and the famous "Storm." His fame is associated with his execution of the "Storm," which, as rendered by him, produced an intense effect.

In the autumn of 1819 the first performance ever given on a Saturday evening in Providence (except in 1807, when the 4th of July fell on that day) took place, the curtain rising earlier than usual that the entertainment might be concluded

at a seasonable hour. The novelty gave offence to some scrupulous people, and several communications respecting the innovation appeared in the newspapers ; but the subject was soon dropped.

In August, 1821, the West Point cadets, numbering rank, file, and musicians, two hundred and thirty-five, arrived in town, and encamped on Camp Hill, in front of Colonel Blodget's residence, now the house of Mr. Albert Smith. In the evening they visited the theatre by invitation, and witnessed the performance of "Laugh when You Can," and of "Of Age To-morrow."

The great tragedian, Junius Brutus Booth, made his first appearance before a Providence audience in 1822, and attracted crowded houses. The Providence *Journal* pronounced him the best actor that had ever visited the town, except Cooke, and in excellent criticisms pointed out his merits. From that time Mr. Booth made frequent visits to Providence, and he never found a more appreciative audience, or more sincere friends than in this place. Here he played his grandest characters in his best manner, and here too he indulged in some of his wildest pranks.

This year was missed the low comedian, Bray. In the preceding year, while playing in Boston he became very ill, and his disease baffled the skill of the physicians of that city. In the hope of regaining his health he left America to revisit his native country in the spring of 1822, but died two days after his arrival, at the house of his sister, on the day he completed his fortieth year. He was a gentleman of irreproachable morals and elegant manners. He had enjoyed the advantages of a good education, and his talents as a musical and dramatic author were considerable. He was master of the French language, and adapted many plays from the French stage for the Boston theatre. As a low comedian he excelled, being one of the best in his time. He had that rare kind of comic talent that may be called the "serio-comic." He was not obliged to say more than was set down for him ; nor resort to the grimaces or other spurious artifices with which many actors endeavor to set on a quantity of barren spectators to laugh ; but his humor was natural, and his self-control so complete, that when the audience were in tears from excessive merriment, himself remained imperturbable

and stolidly unconscious. He was a comedian of the true stamp, one

“ Whose every look and gesture was a joke  
To clapping theatres and shouting crowds,  
And made e'en thick-lipped melancholy  
To gather up her face into a smile  
Before she was aware.”

His death was lamented by all who had the fortune to be acquainted with him.

After this season theatricals were better patronized. For three or four years they had not prospered ; there being less taste for the drama, and the character of the performances having deteriorated. The old supporters of the theatre had begun to weary of their *protégés*, and no longer was it a passport to the most cultivated circles to be an actor. Times were changed since the principal families contended for Mr. Harper's society,—when he dined every Sunday with the Olneys, the Goddards, or the Carters. But this lack of interest in the theatre was in some measure the fault of the actors. They did not maintain so high a standard of character as they did when all their motions were observed, set in note-books, learned, and conned by rote, and when punishment would have followed any misbehavior. Many of them were too fond of conviviality, and on their “off-nights” nearly all of them would indulge in excessive hilarity, so that people began to associate the actor's profession with disorderly conduct. The actors had too much time on their hands, performing only three times a week ; and their representations, being merely repetitions of their Boston performances, cost them but little study. Still further, when the heat of summer prevented the people of Boston from attending the theatre, the actors always came here ; and when the citizens of Providence had become familiar with most of the acting plays, they became fastidious in their criticisms, and could not be induced to crowd into the theatre to witness inferior entertainments.

This year the season began in May, and after a few weeks the theatre closed, to reopen in September.

In 1823 the principal event was the engagement of the elder Wallack ; Messrs. Kilner and Clark being the managers.

He opened as *Rolla* to an excellent house, the receipts being \$330.00, and all his performances were well attended.

In 1824 Henry J. Finn first appeared before the Providence public, playing a round of tragic parts, and producing "Tom and Jerry," in which he personated *Bob Logic*. This play whenever presented proved very attractive, although there were not wanting some who pronounced it immoral, and deplored the vitiated taste then prevailing.

Finn was succeeded by Conway, who produced a favorable impression, attracting excellent houses.

Mr. Finn was born at Cape Breton, Sidney, in 1785. He was brought to this country when a child, and sent to school at Hackensack, N. J., from thence to Princeton (N. J.) College. He was property boy's assistant at the Park Theatre, New York. At the death of his father he visited Europe and made his *debut* at the Haymarket Theatre, London. Revisited America and opened at the Park Theatre as *Shylock*. In 1820 he was associate editor of the Savannah *Georgian*. Went to England in 1821, but returned to America and appeared Oct. 22, 1822, at the Federal Street Theatre, Boston, as *Richard*. First appeared in Philadelphia March 9, 1818, as *Hamlet*. His last appearance on the stage was Jan. 8, 1840, at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, as *Mons. Jaques*. He was lost on the steamer *Lexington*, which was burned on Long Island Sound, Jan. 10, 1840, almost in sight of his own home at Newport.

During the spring of 1825 a calamitous fire occurred, occasioning much distress. It was discovered about eleven o'clock on the evening of the 23d of May, and, despite the efforts of all the inhabitants, it consumed many dwellings on or adjacent to Westminster street, and the Universalist chapel, with the rich contents of its basement, being one hundred bales of cotton and three hundred barrels of whiskey, which had been taken for storage by the thrifty worshippers. As soon as the alarm was given the audience and the actors of the theatre, which then chanced to be open, repaired to the scene, and did good service in saving the property. Mrs. Henry was then the leading lady of the company, and she was particularly conspicuous that night in ministering to the necessities of the houseless. The theatre was used as a store-house for goods saved from the flames, and, a few

nights afterwards, the actors gave a performance for the benefit of the sufferers, the proceeds of which were put into the hands of a gentleman of the town for distribution, the managers adding to the sum a liberal gift.

The theatre remained open only twelve nights at this time, but was reopened in August for a brief season, Mr. and Mrs. J. Barnes being the chief attraction. The stock company included Messrs. Finn, Kilner, Brown, Fielding, Clark, Thayer, Scott, Bernard, Charnock, Spear, Reed, and Mrs. Henry, and Miss Elizabeth Powell, daughter of Mrs. Powell, the lessee, and subsequently the wife of Mr. Finn. She died in Boston, Nov. 17, 1851, and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

In December a very distinguished actor made his first and only appearance in Providence, but not to win loud plaudits from audiences frenzied with delight, as had been his wont in the great London theatres. It was Edmund Kean, who, a fugitive from the fury of a Boston mob, in disguise made Providence his temporary resting place, as he sought security in flight. It is well known that when Kean played in Boston, in 1821, his second engagement, on the night when he was announced to appear as *Richard III.*, so few persons were present at the time of the rising of the curtain that he refused to play, and at once left Boston. On his return to America in 1825, the Boston managers, believing that all animosity towards him had become extinct, engaged him, and advertised his appearance in his greatest character of *Richard*, on the 21st of December. At this time occurred a disgraceful riot, which resulted in great damage to the theatre, and the flight of Kean from a mob thirsting for his blood. Two citizens of Providence, S. S. Southworth and Samuel J. Smith, were upon the stage, and, aided by the managers, were instrumental in saving his life. They conducted him by a private door which opened from the stage to a small dwelling, occupied by Mr. George Clark, the prompter, where he remained several hours in a distracted state of mind, anticipating violence from the mob, who, suspecting his hiding place, made several attempts to enter. Mr. Southworth stood upon the steps of the dwelling, and, when the rioters presented themselves, held them at bay by assuring them that Kean was not there, and, appealing to their manhood and gallantry, told them that



Mrs. Clark, who, as everybody knew, was daily expecting to become a mother, was in an extremely critical condition. About one o'clock that night Kean escaped through Theatre alley, was conveyed to the Exchange Coffee House, and, being there placed under the protection of Thomas Perkins and a man named Collamore, started for Providence. After a few hours rest in Providence, they set out for Worcester, stopping only at Ware, at which place Kean threw off his disguise. This circuitous route was taken to elude the vigilance of the mob, who had been told that the fugitives were going to Worcester. Kean was much frightened, and his terror was expressed in continual ejaculations. It was said that the Boston truckmen were banded to tar and feather him, and it was feared that in their rage they might kill him. He never afterwards visited Providence. In 1826 the theatre was repainted, and was open from May 31st to September 8th. The most attractive performers were Mr. and Mrs. Hamblin, Mr. Finn, and Mr. and Mrs. Barratt. Mrs. Barratt had become very popular the previous season, as Mrs. Henry. She was a sister of Samuel Stockwell, the scene painter, and possessed great talents. Her brother was the adopted son of that benevolent lady, Mrs. Barnes, who for more than twenty-five years appeared every season on the Providence stage, and despite the disadvantages of a short and corpulent figure, remained till her death unrivalled in her personations of the old woman of comedy. The company comprised some actors of excellent repute, among whom were Messrs. Williamson, Stanley, Reed, Brown, Kilner, and Spooner; among the ladies were Mesdames Kelly, Powell, Barnes, and Spooner, with Misses Kelly, Powell, and the McBrides.

The expectation of seeing Kean was very high, but the managers, Kilner & Clark, did not deem it prudent to engage him, as they had cause to fear he might not receive a gracious welcome from all classes of the citizens. When Kean played his first engagement in Boston, his performances had been witnessed by scores of Providence people who took the journey for that purpose,<sup>1</sup> and were now desirous of seeing him on their own stage; but this consummation of their wishes was never attained.

<sup>1</sup> The journey to Boston was not dispatched in 1821 with the same celerity as it now is, but was performed in stage coaches, which left Providence at 9 A. M., and arrived in Boston at 6 P. M. They stopped at intervals of eight or nine miles to change horses, and to give the

On the 9th of May, 1827, Clark & Charnock, having purchased the unexpired lease of Mrs. Powell, opened the theatre at reduced prices of admission, and, in June, introduced to Providence the American tragedian, Edwin Forrest. Small but fashionable houses witnessed the personations of this gentleman, whose name soon afterwards became sufficient to crowd the houses nightly. When he played *Damon* for his benefit, the audience was somewhat larger than on the preceding nights. Being called before the curtain, he thus addressed those who were present :

"Ladies and gentlemen,—Though much fatigued by the labors of this evening, I obey your call, and assure you that for the many and brilliant evidences you have given me of your approbation and respect, you have my sincere thanks.

"This is the first season I ever had the honor of appearing before a Providence audience, and though since I have been with you the theatre has not been, for some cause unknown to me, so fully attended as I anticipated, still the silence and attention that has been evinced by those who have honored it with their presence, has been far more grateful to my feelings, than the vain, empty, and injudicious noise and applause of the million."

Some who were not present took umbrage at this speech as it was reported, but after it was published all offence died away, and here, as elsewhere, no actor proved so attractive as Mr. Forrest.

Edwin Forrest, one of the greatest tragedians and exponents of Shakspeare, was born in Philadelphia, March 9, 1806, and died in the same city in 1872. His father was a Scotchman and his mother an American. There were six children, Edwin being the fourth. His elder brother was a

passengers opportunities for obtaining spirituous drinks. The first stopping place was at Barrows's, where all drank; and then, after short delay, the coach proceeded to Hatch's, where there was another delay and a repetition of the drinking process. The longest rest was at Fuller's, the half-way house; and here the passengers dined, smoked, slept, or strolled about for two hours, when the coach was brought to the door, where it waited a long while for them to reassemble; it being as difficult a task for the driver to collect them together, as for a captain of a ship to get his crew aboard for a voyage. The afternoon was spent in the same manner as the early part of the day, the tired travellers reaching Boston in time to take some refreshment and visit the theatre.

When a steamboat line was established between New York and Providence, the greater number of the travellers came from Boston, and gave such an impetus to the transportation business, that there were two lines of stages running daily between Providence and Boston; one of them leaving this town early in the morning, and the other at about eleven o'clock, A. M., on the arrival of the New York boat. Of course there was much emulation between the lines, each competing with the other in celerity, the excellence of the coaches, and the cheapness of the fares. One of these lines employed two hundred and thirteen horses and twenty coaches, and, during the year 1828, received from passengers the sum of \$82,000. The other line received that year \$35,000. This competition shortened the time of the journey to seven hours.

tanner and currier, and in his shop Edwin gave his first recitation, on a stone table (used by his brother for dressing leather), for the amusement of the workmen. At ten years of age he was taken from school and placed in a German importing house. Young Forrest gave so much more of his attention to play-acting than he did to his "boss's" interest, that the latter would often remark: "Edwin, this *theoretical* infatuation will be your ruin." He soon left and went to the old South Street Theatre. He next joined a Thespian society in Chestnut street, where he became the "star" of the evening. In 1817 he appeared at the Apollo Theatre. His costume on this occasion consisted of thick, heavy shoes, coarse woollen stockings and a short white dress, which reached to his knees only, with a red scarf around his head. His first appearance on a regular stage was as *Young Norval* at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, Nov. 27, 1820. The cool reception accorded him on this occasion did not discourage him in the least; on the contrary, he continued studying harder and harder, resolved to adopt the stage as his profession. On the 6th of January, 1821, he took his first benefit, appearing as *Octavian*, in "The Mountaineers." He then wended his steps westward, and made his first appearance in Cincinnati in the fall of 1822, as *Malfort*, in "The Soldier's Daughter." During his engagement there he played *Richard*, and the editor of a paper there was called a madman for prophesying his future greatness.

In Louisville, Mr. Forrest played *Othello* and several other characters for the first time, with scarcely any knowledge of the text. Strange as it may seem now, at this time Mr. Forrest's taste was decidedly for low comedy, and he played *Blaise* and *Lubin* with much success. While in Louisville he assumed the character of a negro dandy. He suffered many privations, being obliged on one occasion to swim over the Muskingum river, the stream being very high and his funds very low. He boiled corn as hard as Pharoah's heart to keep up life. This was in the wilds of Kentucky. After playing in the different cities out west, he joined a circus company as tumbler and rider, at a salary of twelve dollars per week, for a season of twelve months. It has been doubted by some that Forrest ever performed feats of agility in the circus, but there is no mistake about it. He performed in the old North

Pearl Street Amphitheatre, in Albany, for a wager. (He was at the time attached to the Pearl Street Theatre, under the management of Gilfert), in a stilt-vaulting act, eliciting shouts of laughter and applause: He also made a flying leap through a barrel of red fire on another occasion, singeing his eyebrows off. Mr. Forrest's first appearance as a star was at the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, July 5, 1826, as *Othello*. He made a tour of Europe in 1834-35; returned to New York in 1836, where he played for about six weeks, and returned to England to play a professional engagement. He first appeared on the London stage, Oct. 17, 1836, at Drury Lane Theatre, as *Sparticus*. It was during this visit he married Miss Catherine Sinclair. Had his suit in America succeeded when he tried to secure the hand of Jane Placide, very different would have been his lot. Her character would have softened his asperities and made him a very superior man. The misery which resulted from his marriage with Miss Sinclair is well known.

Catharine Norton Sinclair, the daughter of John Sinclair, the vocalist, was born in England, and there she was married to Forrest in 1837. They were mutually smitten with each other; the course of true love for once ran smooth, and they were united. For ten years their married life was happy, but they had no children that lived, although four were born to them. Despairing of an heir to his fortune, Forrest bought an estate above New York, upon the Hudson, with a view to the establishment, after his death, of a home for superannuated actors, and also a dramatic school. Here the castle, which is still the object of admiration to all who pass up and down the noble river, was built; to serve first as a home for Mr. and Mrs. Forrest, and, after their death, for the object mentioned. In the spring of 1848 circumstances occurred which led to the bitter jealousy of the actor, to crimination, separation, and at length to a suit for divorce. A cross-suit was immediately begun, and the trial opened in December, 1851, with Charles O'Connor as her counsel. The interest was intense and public opinion much divided. The result was an acquittal of the wife and judgment that Mr. Forrest pay her \$3,000 a year alimony. Five times he appealed the case, and for eighteen years it was in the courts. Then he paid over the award. Out of \$64,000 coming to her

at last, \$59,000 went to the lawyers and for other legal expenses. Edwin Forrest was a defeated man ever after this miserable lawsuit, and though gold flowed in on him from the multitude of friends who believed in him, life was soured in him, and he was a disappointed man so long as he lived. In 1852 we find him playing *Macbeth* in New York to crowded houses. In 1854 he retired from the stage for four years. In 1860 he again began playing in New York with his accustomed vigor and with renewed applause, and he held the stage from thence onward, with occasional lapses, till 1871, when he retired because of sickness—gout and other complications. He sought rest at his home in Philadelphia in the early months of 1872, and feeling better, determined to enter theatrical life as a reader, but the trial resulted unsatisfactorily. On the 11th of December he wrote to his friend, Mr. Oakes, of Boston, his last letter. On the 12th of December, 1872, his servants noticed that he had not called them as was his wont, and his valet, going to his bedchamber, knocked, and, receiving no response, entered and found him cold in death. He had died painlessly and suddenly, and with his arms folded.

His wife died on the 24th of June, 1891. She had many years previous retired from the stage.

Mr. Forrest was supported during his engagement by Mr. Alexander Wilson and Mrs. Stone; the assistance of artists of superior talent being indispensable to the successful rendition of the Shakspearean drama. Mrs. Stone was originally Miss Banister, of Boston, and married Mr. Joseph Legg, an actor well known in Providence. Her second husband was Mr. Stone.

In August, Miss Mary Ann McBride, a young lady attached to the company, whose excellent character had won her many friends, died in the eighteenth year of her age. She had adopted the stage from necessity, and had become the main support of her mother and a brother of tender years.

Her father had come from Scotland to New York, about the year 1817, and being of indolent and thriftless habits, was unable to support his family. In this emergency Mrs. McBride conceived the idea of introducing her two daughters, Mary Ann, aged fourteen, and Cecilia, aged twelve, upon

the stage ; and, as they were too young to be accepted by any manager, she resorted to the expedient of presenting them as infant prodigies. She gave them lessons in elocution, and taught them a number of scenes from the dramatic poets. Then, with a pamphlet of commendations from M. M. Noah, Samuel Woodworth, George P. Morris, and other influential journalists, this little Thespian band directed their footsteps westward, taking Mr. McBride, whose skill as a harpist made him useful as an orchestra.

After a year of profitless wanderings, they at length found themselves at New Orleans, discouraged, without funds, and almost destitute of wardrobe. The girls were engaged by James H. Caldwell, who had recently opened a theatre there, and played under his management such parts as are within the capacity of children. In 1823 they obtained employment at the Federal Street Theatre, in Boston, and came with the company to Providence, Mary Ann appearing as *Sue* in "Life in London." They continued to visit Providence till 1827, Mary Ann playing the line of "walking ladies," and Cecilia being available principally as a dancer, though in a few parts, such as *Albert* in "William Tell," she won general admiration. The spectacle of "Cherry and Fair Star" being produced, Mary Ann as *Cherry* made a hit, and at once became a reigning toast. Many young men were suitors for her hand, but she favored none except Mr. Samuel Jenks Smith, a gentleman about twenty-six years of age, of literary tastes, gifted with rare colloquial powers, and of high moral character. His generous nature and fine promise had gained him hosts of friends, and those who knew him most intimately, prized him highest.

Mr. Smith's suit prospered, his overtures were approved by the lady's mother, and the nuptial day was fixed. At this time the theatre had been closed for lack of patronage, and all the actors had gone away, leaving this family busy preparing for the wedding. While engaged upon the bridal wardrobe, Miss McBride pricked her hand between the second and third fingers with her needle, but paid no attention to the wound, apparently so trivial. In a day or two it became painful, and the physician who attended her could afford no relief. Another day passed, tetanus appeared, and in a few hours the young lady was dead. The announcement of her

death was received with general regret, and, on the day of her funeral, a numerous train of mourners followed her remains to the grave.

The week after this sad event Mr. Kilner came with the Federal street company from Boston, and, on the 31st of August, reopened the Providence theatre for a single night for the benefit of Mrs. McBride, who had become somewhat involved in debt by the calamity that had befallen her, and was likely to suffer from straitened circumstances.

The alacrity with which player-folk have ever manifested to spring to the relief of those who are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, still characterizes them. More than the members of any other profession they feel for others' woes, and the sight of distress will draw from them their entire treasures of money and sympathy. Age does not wither, nor custom stale their infinite humanity. Surely the art which cherishes so tenderly the heaven-born charity, most precious of all graces, the coverer of multitudinous sins—which preserves to extreme age the generous impulses of youth, and, while it binds its votaries in ties as close as those of consanguinity, does not diminish a benevolence that would embrace all mankind—cannot deserve the condemnation continually invoked upon it by the sectarian pulpits.

The play selected for the benefit was "The Soldier's Daughter;" Mr. Thomas Kilner enacting, as the part was never before played, *Governor Heartall*, and Mrs. Pelby, then in her prime, sustaining in a matchless manner the character of *Widow Cheerly*. At the close of the performance Mr. Kilner came forward and made an address, pronounced by those who heard it to be inimitable for pathos, appropriateness, and elegance of diction, deeply affecting the audience.

The receipts from the sale of tickets at the box-office exceeded three hundred dollars. The amount was much increased by the contributions of several gentlemen who sympathized with the beneficiary in her great bereavement.

Mr. Conway, the celebrated tragedian, was accidentally in town at this time, and was requested to take part in the performance. He would gladly have consented, but, being then a candidate for holy orders, he felt obliged to decline the invitation. He however contributed twenty dollars, and made

one of the audience on the night of the benefit. Voluntary gifts were received from Mr. Dickson of one hundred dollars; Mr. Finn of twenty dollars; and from two merchants of two hundred dollars. It has been stated that the entire amount received by Mrs. McBride was about eight hundred dollars; no contingent expenses being deducted from this sum by the noble-hearted actors.

Mr. Stimpson, the manager of the circus then performing in the brick building erected for equestrian performances in the rear of the Washington Garden, was desirous of closing his house for that night, had he felt at liberty to do so; but, although his performance was given as usual, he purchased tickets for his whole company, thus contributing nearly twenty dollars to the receipts.

A number of the residents of Pawtucket came to the theatre that night to assist on an occasion which drew so largely upon the sympathies of the public.

Miss Cecilia (or Celia) continued on the stage until 1844, dying in New York in January, 1846, after having obtained the distinction of being the best walking lady in America.

Of all the English actors who have visited this country since the advent of Kean, William Augustus Conway was in some respects the best, and certainly his personal history was the most interesting. He has been pronounced by mouths of wisest censure the prince of *Hamlets*, and the lordliest *Coriolanus* that ever appeared upon our stage. His style of acting was intellectual, and devoid of every kind of trick; his figure was stately, and his voice, of surprising clearness and compass, was long remembered by those who had listened to his expressive enunciation of those noble passages in which our greatest dramatist gives utterance to some generous sentiment which finds an echo in every breast. To eminent success in the higher walks of the histrionic art there is one indispensable requisite, and that was Conway's—soul. Art may counterfeit pathos, and wear the similitude of passion—and be highly applauded withal; but unless the heart of the actor be in harmony with that of mankind, his personations will have no vitality; they will lack the ring of true metal; and the expectant, yearning listener will miss an essential something, not describable, but whose absence may be potently felt. You may hear a *prima donna* of the opera



sing, and while the *dilettanti* are exhausting their vocabularies to find panegyrics for her wonderful execution of passages, whose difficulty is appreciated only by scientific musicians, a miscellaneous audience will yawn as she triumphs over the seeming impossibilities of the score. Then shall another begin the same song, and, as face answers to face in water, so shall her sympathetic tones call tears from unsounded depths of feeling ; and, long after that sweet voice is still, "shall vibrate in the memory."

To some, like Malibran and Edmund Kean, nature has given the "key of staunchless tears ;" and, at their bidding we laugh, we sigh, we weep. Conway possessed this rarest of gifts, and pathetic passages delivered by him had an unusual tenderness, and awakened in his hearers an interest in the man himself. The modulations of his voice in "Hamlet," in "Othello," and especially in the "Stranger," can never be forgotten.

He had been educated for the law, but abandoned the study of his profession for the stage, and speedily attained distinction as an actor in the London theatres. He was religiously inclined, his manners were unexceptionable, and his tastes refined ; but he was of a melancholic disposition, and morbidly sensitive. His conspicuous position as an actor exposed him to severe trials, the chief of which were the attacks of certain unscrupulous critics in the interest of a rival player, their vindictiveness increasing when the sufferings of their victim became apparent. One unfeeling wretch having become possessed of a piece of family scandal relating to Conway's parentage, gave publicity to it ; and then the actor, overwhelmed with shame, abandoned his place of vantage, and sought shelter in the obscurity of the condition of a prompter. He was soon induced by the entreaties and the encouragement of real friends to resume his rightful station, and was again winning golden opinions, when some newspaper offensively suggested to him that he ought to understand that for a tragedian something was needful besides legs and arms. Conway was again crushed to earth, loathing his own person—for he was unreasonably sensitive on the subject of his height, being a little over six feet tall—and, breaking away from the theatre, he hid himself a while, reduced to a condition bordering on insanity.

He was at this time engaged to come to America, and appeared in New York in his great part of *Hamlet*, creating a most favorable impression. For two or three years he was occupied in visiting the principal theatres, achieving fame in his progress, admired by the public, and loved by his intimates. At length he resolved to take holy orders, for which he had long cherished a predilection, chose a retreat in Newport, R. I., and devoted himself to the study of theology, though occasionally emerging to give poetical readings for the purpose of replenishing his purse. He remained in Newport several months, as secluded as a hermit. His sedentary life gave him opportunities for sad remembrances, his griefs made inroads on his health, and, it was feared that they had unsettled his mind. Certain it is that he perpetually brooded over his sorrows, and deemed himself the child of misfortune. In the spring of 1828, while a passenger by sea from New York to Savannah, he was lost overboard. Many surmised that in a fit of mental aberration he had leaped into the sea, but his friends believed that his death was the result of an accident. Even after his life was ended the voice of calumny was raised against him; and those who decried the stage pointed their morals with allusions to his untimely fate. It was reserved for a Providence newspaper—that one claiming to represent the sentiments of the most religious of the community—to publish some innuendoes, as malevolent as they were unfounded, impugning his motives in taking orders. Near the same period a bookseller in a southern city published certain letters which had passed between Conway and Mrs. Piozzi (formerly Mrs. Thrale), written when she was eighty years of age, and tried to give an impression that the relations between them had been of a criminal character. Nothing but the villainess of the slander could have given the tale a moment's currency, for Conway's conduct towards Mrs. Piozzi showed that he was the soul of honor, and governed by chivalrous motives, almost quixotic in their loftiness.

He was of a retiring disposition, and carefully avoided all those adventitious aids by which men attain notoriety. In one of his visits to Providence he lodged at the Franklin House, and occupied a commodious apartment, such as was befitting his quality; but, there being a great influx of strangers on account of some extraordinary attraction, the public

houses of the town were pressed for space to set up beds for their guests; and Conway hearing the landlord lamenting his want of accommodations, tendered his own large room. His offer being accepted, he betook himself to the attic, and there remained until the landlord's exigency was overpast, and the inn had regained its accustomed appearance.

His extreme modesty was equally observable in the theatre. When he was playing an engagement he assumed no lofty demeanor towards the stock actors, and when the hour for performance drew near, he was always seen unobtrusively making his way towards the theatre, carrying his own swords and other essential "properties."<sup>1</sup>

On the 24th of September a goodly company from Providence visited Boston to be present at the opening of the new Tremont theatre, and were highly delighted with their trip.

<sup>1</sup> An interesting biography of this ill-fated gentleman appeared in the *Literary Cadet* of Feb. 9, 1828; and an original poem in the next number of the same paper makes a feeling allusion to his sad death. They are accessible in the alcoves of the Providence Athenæum.

## CHAPTER IX.

1828-1832.

WILLIAM DINNEFORD LEASES THE THEATRE—APPEARANCE OF CLARA FISHER—CHARLES YOUNG MAINTAINS A SUMMER SEASON—JOSEPH COWELL'S MISADVENTURE—A NEW MANAGER—A THEATRICAL DISTURBANCE—DISASTROUS SPECULATION OF MOSES S. PHILLIPS—A NEW THEATRE PROJECTED—ANECDOTE OF BOOTH—REPARATION OF THE THEATRE—A NEW ACT DROP GIVES DISSATISFACTION—WILLIAM DINNEFORD—THE LOTTERY SYSTEM—MASTER BURKE—MISHAPS OF A. W. JACKSON—MANAGEMENT OF THOMAS HILSON—THE FINAL PERFORMANCE—THE THEATRE SOLD TO GRACE CHURCH CORPORATION—THE DEMOLITION OF THE BUILDING—THE CHANGE IN THE CHARACTER OF THE PATRONAGE OF THE THEATRE IN ITS LAST YEARS.

IN 1828 Mr. William Dinneford took a lease of the theatre, and, on the 18th of March, opened with a redecorated house, new scenery, and a good company of performers; among whom were Messrs. Hyatt, T. Placide, Kelsey, Duffy, Crouta, Mestayer, and Lawton, with Mesdames Dinneford, Buckley, and Brewster. An opening address of much merit, written by Mr. Hyatt, was pronounced by Mr. Duffy. The bill consisted of the equestrian drama of "Timour the Tartar," performed by a troupe from New York; and the farce of "The Turnpike Gate."

On the 26th of the same month, Clara Fisher, then seventeen years of age, made her *début* as *Albina Mandeville* in the "Will;" and *Julia* in the "Four Mowbrays." Her engagement, though short, was a triumph. She elicited as much enthusiasm here as in other places. Throughout the country Clara Fisher's name appeared on everything vendible, and her brother having established a newspaper in New York, to secure popularity for it and himself, advertised it as edited by "C. B. J. Fisher, brother of the celebrated Clara Fisher." The excitement in Providence pervaded the breasts of the sedate old merchants, as well as of the younger and

more inflammable sort; and the main topic of conversation everywhere was the charms of Clara Fisher. Her benefit crammed the house, the proceeds reaching the sum of five hundred dollars, being the largest amount ever within the walls of the theatre.

Clara Fisher was born in England, July 14, 1811, the daughter of Frederick George Fisher. Taken at the age of six to see a rehearsal of "Gulliver in Lilliput," to be played by children at Drury Lane, she was as badly "stage-struck" as many have been at a later period in life, and begged her father's permission to join the little company. Having pleased the manager by her recitations, she was engaged, and in a masque written for her by her father, made a hit to start with. She was subsequently engaged at Covent Garden, and was looked upon as a youthful prodigy. As such, she starred for several years, totally eclipsing all other juvenile performers. At the age of seventeen she came to America, and at this time must have been a very bewitching creature. She is thus described by Ireland:

"Her person, below the middle height, and just reaching, but not exceeding, a delicate plumpness, was exquisitely formed; her manners were sprightly and vivacious, yet perfectly natural and artless; her expression arch and intelligent, her cheeks dimpling with smiles. Appearing as she constantly did, in the characters of boys and striplings, she had her fine hair closely cut on the back of her head, while on her brow she wore rolls or puffs, which were immediately adopted as the fashion, while an imitation of her delicate, but natural lisp, was considered equally indispensable. Her name was borrowed to give popularity to new fashions and old hotels, slow stagers and fast racers; and anything or anybody who could claim the most distant connection with 'the celebrated Clara Fisher,' was sure of attracting notice and distinction."

In her earlier years her success was equally apparent in tragedy, opera, or farce, but later in life her face, voice, and person were best adapted to the lighter characters of opera and comedy. She played *Ophelia* and *Viola*, but produced far more effect in the more every-day character of *Clari*, in Payne's opera, which she played with such pathos as to force tears to the eyes of her audience, whether they would or no.

Her *Lady Teazle* is said to have been a charming performance, and also her *Lady Gay Spanker*, although her *petite* figure was not suitable to represent the generally received idea of those characters. She possessed a thorough knowledge of music, and in opera appeared to all the advantage that her limited range of voice permitted. It was in ballads, however, that her greatest musical success was won, her expression in singing Irish and other sentimental songs gaining for her her greatest popularity. One of her best characters, in later days, was the *Fool*, in "Lear," which she made very important when Macready brought out the play as originally written.

Her American *début* was at the Park Theatre, New York, Sept. 11, 1827, as *Albina Mandeville*, in "The Will," and in the farce "Old and Young," in which she personated the four *Mowbrays*. After a most successful career, she married, Dec. 6, 1834, Mr. James Gasper Maeder, a distinguished musician, and the vocal preceptor of Charlotte Cushman and many others. Much of Mrs. Maeder's fortune was lost in the United States Bank, and much more in theatrical management. She retired from the stage for nearly a decade, but reappeared in Lucy Rushton's New York company, and is still in the profession. She has visited Providence two or three times within the past ten years, as a member of Arthur Rehan's company. She is still bright and active, and as well qualified to play the parts she now undertakes, as any in the business.

Miss Fisher was followed by Miss Kelly, and then by Mr. and Mrs. Blake. Mr. Dinneford terminated his season on the 1st of May, having lost a considerable sum by his enterprise.

About the middle of June, Mr. Charles Young, formerly well known in Providence, came with a portion of the Bowery theatre company, containing some good actors, namely: Messrs. Archer, Comer, J. Mills Brown, Faulkner, and Lawes; also Mesdames Young, Lawes, and Spooner; and Miss Hamilton. He kept the theatre open until the 10th of September, with this succession of stars: Cooper, Miss Rock, Mrs. Duff, Hackett, Louisa Lane (eight years old), and Arthur Keene, the vocalist. Mr. Keene took his benefit on the 1st of July, and Joseph Cowell, the comedian, being on his way

from Boston to New York, had agreed to stop over night, and play *Darby* in the "Poor Soldier," on this occasion.

Mr. Cowell left Boston in the mail stage, at one o'clock in the morning, and arrived in Providence in time for rehearsal the same day. The weather being exceedingly warm, he determined after dinner to take his lost share of sleep. So he selected a file of papers from the reading-room, and, finding a mattress thrown down in the corner of a balcony of his hotel, where all the air Providence could bestow seemed to flutter, he arranged a siesta. When he awoke it was dusk, and, after repairing his toilet, he set off for the theatre, all his companions being there, although he had to play only in the last piece. As he passed through the bar he inquired of a servant sweeping it out, "what is the time?" "About four, sir," said he. "About eight, more likely," replied Mr. Cowell, and on he walked.

The shops were all closed, and everything appeared exceedingly quiet; but, as he was prepared by report for the steady habits of Providence, its appearance did not strike him as extraordinary. The carriers hanging morning papers over the knobs of the doors, or insinuating them beneath, were the only human beings he met on his way to the theatre, which to his astonishment he found closed and quiet. A thought flashed across his mind—could it be possible? He made an inquiry of a milkman, and found to his amazement that it was not *to-night*, but *to-morrow morning*. To return to the hotel and make an explanation he knew full well would be at the expense of remaining to perform that night. So he quietly went on board the steamboat *Connecticut*, which was to take him to New York, leaving his baggage behind. His old friend Captain Bunker, met him with astonishment. He had been at the play, and fully described the consternation that had been occasioned. The theatre had been crowded; and, after every room in the Franklin House had been searched, and every conceivable place in the town, it had been unanimously agreed that in walking to the theatre after dark, he had walked off the dock. Already a reward had been offered for the recovery of his body, and had not his business been too urgent to admit of the delay, he would have delivered himself up and claimed the ten dollars for the joke's sake; but, as it was, he got the captain to keep the secret, lay *perdu*

till the boat was off, and took the news of his supposed untimely end to personally contradict it in New York and Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup>

The theatre was again opened in 1829, under the management of Mr. Wilson, Mr. J. Phalen, a gentleman from New York, becoming the lessee of Mr. Dinneford, with the intention of maintaining a winter season ; but, after four weeks of losses, he abandoned the undertaking.

Near the close of Mr. Wilson's management there was a near approach to a theatrical riot. On the 27th of February, Mr. Ball, one of the members of the company, while playing the part of *Cassio*, was fiercely hissed. The storm increasing, he addressed the audience, and, in a brief and manly speech, offered to meet any one to whom he had given offence, after the performance. He was then allowed to proceed. On the next night of his appearance a large party went to the theatre to drive him from the stage. They prevented the progress of the play, and, when the manager asked the cause of the interruption, they said that Mr. Ball had insulted Americans. They finally succeeded in terminating the performance in confusion. A mob collected about the door, and were loud in their threats. Mr. Ball in some way eluded their pursuit, and, after some delay, they dispersed without any act of violence. The words spoken by the actor, as it afterwards proved, were uttered in jest to a friend, and, having been overheard, were misconstrued, and thus mischief ensued.

In June, Moses J. Phillips made a disastrous dramatic speculation. He came here with a company, much larger than any that had ever before appeared in Providence, his orchestral department being also of unusual strength. He had also made many engagements with other actors in New York, and, after he had inaugurated his season, they were continually arriving in town. Unfortunately he had over-estimated the inclination of the public towards dramatic entertainments, and for several weeks his receipts rarely equalled the amount of salaries he had engaged to pay. The dancers, Mons. and Mdme. Charles Ronzi Vestris, brought good houses, but their aid could not long hold up his sinking fortunes. His chief attraction was Mrs. Austin, an eminent vocalist, whose per-

<sup>1</sup> Cowell's *Thirty Years Among the Players*.



sonal beauty was celebrated. He soon found himself unable to pay his company, and, at the same time, his other creditors were clamorous for their pay. For a few days he purchased peace with promises, but at length the actors rebelled, and officers were understood to have writs for his arrest. At this juncture a few friends clandestinely took him to a steamer, hid him in an obscure corner, and he soon distanced his pursuers.

The distressed condition of the performers induced them to give a performance in order to obtain means of reaching other places; and Mr. John Duff happening to be in town, was announced in the tragedy of "Venice Preserved." The receipts did not exceed fifty dollars, but with this sum and a liberal gift from Mrs. Austin, who was rich, and said to be the wife of an English baronet, they managed to reach more hospitable cities.

Three of the company, Gobright, Read, and another, were journeymen printers, and, procuring some employment in one of the printing-offices here, they managed to secure means to enable them to get away.

Phillips was really an honest man in his intentions, and it was his misfortune, rather than his fault, that he miscalculated the patronage of the town. He was always unlucky in his speculations, and died some years ago in New York, in indigent circumstances, just as he had paid up, it was said, his dues to the Dramatic Association Fund, and was fancying himself provided with a moderate subsistence for his old age.

The unprofitable results of the last few seasons, gave a death-blow to an enterprise which several public-spirited citizens had been planning for two or three years. The success of the old theatre for several seasons had been so decided, that the stockholders were receiving an interest of more than thirty per cent. on their property; and, on benefit occasions, it not unfrequently happened that all seeking admittance could not be accommodated. In the spring of 1825, shares in the theatre stock, which a few years before could have been bought at sixty-five dollars, sold at public auction for two hundred and twenty-five dollars each. In 1827 the newspapers had advocated the erection of a new theatre, capable of being used in winter as well as in summer, and in appear-

ance and commodiousness befitting the increasing prosperity of the town. The proposed site was a lot in the rear of Colonel Atwell's estate, and had frontage on Dorrance, Pine and Orange streets. At this time the gentleman who was the most zealous promoter of the project died, and the subject was temporarily abandoned. In April, 1829, another movement was made in the same direction. A plan of the contemplated theatre, drawn by Warren and Bucklin, was on exhibition at Mr. Dinneford's office, where books were opened for subscriptions for the stock, the value of the shares being fixed at two hundred and fifty dollars. The affair however lagged, and, business being everywhere in a depressed condition, it was soon dropped. Theatricals felt the effects of the stagnation in commerce, and from this time the occupation of Providence managers became more and more unprofitable.

On the 16th of November, Booth began an engagement in Boston. He performed one or two nights with fine effect, when he was taken ill, and obliged to keep his room. He at length improved in health, and was announced December 7th as *Ludovico* in "Evadne." The house was crowded to its utmost capacity, about one thousand dollars being taken at the doors.

"Mr. Booth's first entrance on the stage denoted something unusual. He was careless and hesitating in his delivery, and his countenance had none of its customary expression. He would falter in his discourse, jumble scraps of other plays in his dialogue, run to the prompter's side of the stage, and lean against the wings, while the prompter endeavored to help him forward in the play, by speaking out the language of his part loud enough to be heard in the galleries. In this manner he made a shift to get through the first two acts of the tragedy. Those familiar with the theatre saw very plainly that something was rotten in the state of Denmark; but a great proportion of the audience, not knowing much of his manner of acting, did not comprehend the business, but only looked on, and wondered that an actor of so much celebrity could play with so little spirit—some even doubting his identity.

"Still the play progressed; and, in the early part of the third act, while he was engaged in parlance with the *King of Naples*, the audience were surprised by his suddenly breaking off from the measured heroic dignity of his stage tone, and, with a comical simper, falling at once into a colloquial, gossiping sort of chatter with His Majesty, thus: 'Upon my word, sir, I don't know, sir,' etc. For a moment all was silence, when Mr. Booth turning round, and facing the spectators, began to address them in this manner: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I really don't know this part. I studied it only once before, much against my inclination, I will

read the part, and the play shall go on. By your leave the play shall go on, and Mr. Wilson shall read the part for me. Here an overpowering burst of hissing and exclamations rose from all parts of the house, while Mr. Booth continued to face the audience with a grinning look, which at length broke out into an open laugh. Mr. Smith then came from behind the scenes and led him off, Mr. Booth exclaiming: 'I can't read; I'm a charity boy;' (in reference probably to his part in the afterpiece) 'I can't read—take me to the Lunatic Hospital!' Here the drop curtain fell amid the murmurs and hisses of the spectators.

"Mr. Smith then appeared in front, and explained to the audience that Mr. Booth was subject to fits of temporary insanity, and that such was his condition at present, assuring them that his indisposition could not be attributed to the effects of liquor, as his attendants, who had been with him through the day, averred that he had tasted nothing of a spirituous kind.

"Mr. Booth was immediately carried to his lodgings, and, his disorder having increased, it was on Wednesday deemed advisable to obtain a consultation as to the propriety of placing him in the Lunatic Asylum; but, on repairing to his room, he was not to be found. Search was made for him, but the only information that could be obtained was, that he had applied at the Marlboro' Hotel for a seat in the Providence stage; but hearing that the stage had already departed, he went off, and whither, no one knew. It was not until the arrival of a stage from Providence, that intelligence was conveyed by the driver that on Wednesday he met Mr. Booth between Dedham and Walpole, on foot, and almost destitute of clothing, walking towards Providence. He reached Providence on Thursday, having slept, as it was supposed, in the woods on Wednesday night.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after his arrival here he proceeded to Deming's sailor boarding-house, at the junction of South Main and Wickenden streets, which he reached in his stocking feet, having thrown away his shoes. It was soon noised over the town that Booth, in miserable plight, had gone there; and the news coming to the ears of his friend, Col. Josiah Jones, he at once hastened to the place. On entering, he met Booth, who gave him a kindly greeting, and asked him to take off his boots that he, Booth, might try them on. Colonel Jones complied with this strange request, and was surprised to see him after putting them on, leave the house without a word. Colonel Jones borrowed a pair of shoes of Mr. Deming, and overtook Mr. Booth, whom he found hurrying along the street in a highly excited manner. He at once took him in charge and led him to his own residence on Aborn street. In a few days Mr. Booth's fit passed away, and a rational frame of mind ensued. Many visitors flocked to the house

<sup>1</sup> Clapp's Record of the Boston Stage.

to see and converse with the eccentric actor. One Sunday evening when the parlor was filled with company,—mostly religious people, who were unaccustomed to attend the theatre, but none the less desirous of witnessing the effect which he was capable of producing by his skill in elocution,—Colonel Jones asked him to read some selections for the gratification of the visitors. He yielded assent, and desired that a Bible should be brought. He was provided with one, and, opening it with reverence, he chose a passage and began to read. As his impressive voice was heard, every sound was hushed, and the reading proceeded in perfect silence. The words of inspiration continued to flow from the lips of the reader, sobs were occasionally heard, and, when he had concluded, scarcely one in the room was not weeping. All testified that never before had the sublimity of the language of Holy Writ been made apparent to them, and Booth seized the opportunity to descant on the frame of mind in which the Scriptures should be approached, and to condemn the soulless readings of those pastors who read as an unwelcome task to listless hearers the awful revelations of their Maker.

Mr. Booth did not immediately regain his old vigor of mind. He had some lucid intervals, and then aberrations of intellect would succeed, continuing so long that sometimes it was feared that his reason was completely destroyed. He at length so far recovered that it was deemed safe to allow his return to his family. He was received in New York by Edwin Forrest, and, after a little rest, proceeded to his destination.

In the early part of 1830, Mr. Dinneford made some improvements in the equipments of the stage, and in the arrangement of the auditorium. He substituted light iron pillars for the large wooden posts which had supported the galleries, and carried the lower tier of boxes forward, thus gaining a few more box seats. He also procured at an expense of one hundred dollars, a new act-drop, painted by Mr. R. Jones, of Boston, which was much disliked by the patrons of the house, many of them preferring Warrall's panoramic view of Providence, which had been in constant use since 1812. Mr. Dinneford made a public explanation of the reasons for the change, stating that the old drop, having for several years been deteriorating in appearance, had sustained

such additional injury during the past winter that it could not be safely used. The public continued to express their dissatisfaction, until the new curtain was removed. The old favorite was then rehung, and remained in its accustomed place as long as the building was used as a theatre.

Although Mr. George Barrett officiated as manager during the season, the lease continued in the hands of Mr. Dinneford. This gentleman was a native of Somersetshire, in England, and had been a clerk in a London banking house; but, becoming enamored of Isabella Mordecai, an employé of Drury Lane theatre, he married her and came to the United States about the year 1825. Changing his name from Ford to Dinneford, he went upon the stage, but failed to achieve any marked success as an actor. His business habits being good, he was employed to take charge of a large equestrian and dramatic company, in the capacity of treasurer and business manager. This company he brought to Providence, on becoming the lessee of the theatre. Here he met with no profit, except during the engagement of Clara Fisher, and, after one season's experience as a theatrical manager, he became a broker and dealer in lotteries, occasionally acting as an auctioneer, and finally opened a restaurant on Westminster street, and a public house at Horton's Grove. Failing in business here, he removed to New York, opened the Franklin theatre in Chatham street, and in two years accumulated a fortune. He then rebuilt the Bowery theatre, which had just been destroyed by fire, and became a bankrupt. After this reverse he travelled several years as the manager of a troupe of strollers, and finally started for California. He stopped at Panama to open a hotel, but soon fell a victim to the climate.

The business of the theatre proved so unremunerative that it was kept open only a few weeks. Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Smith, and several other actors of excellent talents, had little power of attraction, and, save the brief engagements of Clara Fisher, and Hackett, who played a round of Yankee characters, the whole season was unfortunate.

In October, Monsieur Villaneuve, with a small company of acrobats, gave a series of entertainments upon the stage, and, to increase his audiences, introduced a system, then novel,

but bearing a resemblance to the "gift concerts" of a later day. The lotteries which were then authorized for public purposes were well patronized, and tickets were sold by Mr. Dinneford at his office near "Lucky Corner," as he termed the junction of North Main street and Market Square. Monsieur Villaneuve each night distributed among those present at his exhibitions ten tickets in these lotteries, each purchaser of a box seat being entitled to two chances for a ticket, and each purchaser of a seat in the upper boxes, the pit, or the gallery having one chance.

After Mr. Dinneford's retirement from the management he still retained the lease, as has been before stated, but sub-let the theatre to any one making application for it. At length, however, losses in business compelled him to assign his rights to two friends, to whom he was indebted for money advanced by them to him in his necessities. These gentlemen, Messrs. Philip Case and William Marshall, let the building with the scenery and properties to traveling companies, and others desirous of experimenting with the dramatic inclinations of the citizens. Thus, in March, 1831, a company of actors were brought here by Mr. Richard Russell, for the purpose of presenting Master Burke, the young Irish Roscius, as he was called. This prodigy played here eleven nights with good success, the houses several times containing three hundred dollars. One of these performances took place on Saturday evening, being the second time that a performance was ever given in Providence on that evening of the week; and the smallness of the audience showed that even at that late day the public were indisposed to countenance innovations upon their New England habits and principles. Master Burke was really a marvellous boy, and, in his renditions, displayed talents surpassing those of many well reputed actors of mature years. He spoke with force and feeling, but at the end of a long performance he usually showed signs of fatigue, as was but natural in one so young. He was accustomed between the plays to take a violin, and lead the orchestra, where his masterly execution of difficult music never failed to excite the admiration of the audience.

At this time Chapel street was very steep at its western end. Beginning at Burrill street was a famous coasting ground. While the infant prodigy was in the evening de-

fighting the town with his acting, in the daytime he could have been seen enjoying the pastime of coasting with many playmates. A constable came there and warned them that they ran the risk of being fined, and as they were at this intimation about to suspend their sport, Master Burke changed their determination by crying out, "Go ahead, boys, and if any of you are fined, I'll pay it all."

In December of the same year a company from New York kept the theatre open several weeks, just long enough to run themselves out of cash and into debt. They were without means to leave town, and, in their distress, their manager, Andrew W. Jackson, applied to Mr. S. S. Southworth, to write them a play which would draw the unwilling public. He accordingly with much expedition wrote a three act drama, entitled: "The Capture of Prescott, or the Heroism of Barton." This play was hastily produced, and for several nights attracted remunerative houses, supplying the players with funds enough to return to New York. The heroine was personated by Miss Eliza Emery, who had once been a leading actress, and had lately straggled into Providence under peculiar circumstances. One of the last nights being assigned for her benefit, she appeared upon the stage in such a condition as to be unable to utter the words of her part. This misguided woman, who had once been lauded by certain critics as superior to Mrs. Siddons, and had caused acrimonious contests between rival managers in their efforts to secure her talents, died several years later in squalid poverty, debased by her degrading vices.

The prominent feature of the play was the part of *Guy Watson*, personated by Mr. McGuire, an excellent delineator of Ethiopian characters before T. D. Rice and others had acquired distinction in that line. The author had written him a song called "Cold Frosty Morning," and on its execution depended in a great measure the success of the part. From indolence, or from inability to perceive any merit in the song, he refused to learn it, and substituted "The Coal Black Rose." The disgusted author could not by entreaties change the determination of the actor, but at length found a convincing argument; and then Mr. Maguire, with a bank note in his pocket, committed to memory the words of the song, and sang it. It "took" immensely, and

was subsequently a favorite with Ethiopian serenaders. The play gave rise to some ill feeling, as it was supposed by some that the dramatist had indulged his party prejudices and individual malevolence in writing the language of one or two of the *dramatis personæ*; but for this suspicion there was no foundation.

The last manager who essayed to make the old theatre profitable was Thomas Hilson. His initial performance took place Feb. 13, 1832, when the entire receipts of the evening were given by him to the Providence Charitable Fuel Society; a proceeding calling to remembrance that of David Douglass, when seeking to propitiate an unsympathetic public. The final performance occurred March 23, 1832, and consisted of Shakspeare's comedy, "The Merry Wives of Windsor;" the music of Macbeth sung as an interlude by the company; and the farce of "The Sleepwalker." Mrs. Hilson, formerly the popular and admired Miss Johnson, recited in the guise of the Goddess of Liberty, an epilogue written by Mr. Southworth, into which had been introduced a compliment to Andrew Jackson, which was vociferously applauded; followed by a flattering allusion to Henry Clay, which as most of the audience were "locofocos" was vehemently hissed. This epilogue having been mutilated in the green room before its delivery, was subsequently published entire by the author.

At this final performance Mr. Hilson sustained the part of *Sir John Falstaff*. He had stuffed for the fat knight with an unusual quantity of packing, and was waiting to be summoned to the stage from his dressing-room below it. When the time for his entrance upon the scene arrived, he attempted to mount the staircase, but to his dismay found that he was too bulky to pass up the narrow stairs. What was to be done he could not at first decide; for, if he should undress and then remake his person, the stage would be kept waiting long beyond the patience of the audience; and he was on the point of having the matter laid before them, when, at the suggestion of a bystander, he was led to a large trap in the centre of the stage behind the scene, through which he was speedily hoisted by the supernumeraries, and was thus enabled to appear before the spectators with scarcely any delay. Such an accident can not happen in these days of



invention to the actor playing *Falstaff*, who has now merely to don an india rubber undersuit, which can be inflated to any required size, like a life-preserver.

The theatre was now sold by the stockholders to the corporation of Grace Church, who at once proceeded to make the alterations requisite for the purposes to which the building was to be appropriated, despite the remonstrances of the lessees, who offered no obstacles from a desire of maintaining further theatrical performances, but because they deemed themselves entitled to compensation for the remaining portion of their unexpired term. This amount they were willing to receive in pew stock, instead of money, because they were not unwilling to aid the church. Their claims being disregarded, litigation would have ensued, had not the dispute been unexpectedly terminated by the accidental omission of the lessees to tender their rent on a day certain, according to the conditions of the lease. The corporation promptly availed themselves of the laches of their opponents, and, refusing the money proffered three days too late, proceeded with their original intention, and altered the theatre into a place of worship. It continued to be used for religious purposes a number of years, when it was torn down, and replaced by the statelier structure, which now forming the chief ornament of that part of the city, is the seat of the Bishop of Rhode Island.

The process of demolition revealed traces of the earlier uses of the old edifice, and vestiges of its former occupants. As the plastering was removed where the stage had been, especially near that part where the scene painter's gallery once hung, there became visible upon the walls, painted in vacant hours, the names of the actors, who in days gone by had been the darlings of the town, but were now sleeping in their unknown graves. Thus had the listless hands of idleness given brief resurrection to the almost forgotten past, and the bystanders who had lingered to look their last upon the disappearing monument, sighed as they recalled the forms of those who had been the delight and wonder of their youth, and walked away heavy with tender recollections. Had the names uncovered by the falling plaster been those of the recognized benefactors of their day and generation—men who had contributed largely to the material wealth of the town,

building it up until it had become a prosperous city—they would not have evoked such kindly emotions as were produced by the sight of these mementos of thriftless, houseless, but joyous players. Who can explain the marvel?

The loss of the theatre was but little lamented, for of late years the taste for the drama had declined among the opulent citizens, and theatrical performances had been attended by another class of frequenters; the stockholders and their families never entering the doors, except on very rare occasions, such as the last engagement of Cooper, in 1828, when there was a large assemblage of his old friends, many of whom had not witnessed a play since his former visit to Providence, several years previous. So little interest was manifested by the old supporters of the stage for plays, that they were accustomed to send their tickets to certain shops to be sold each day at an abatement from the price demanded at the box-office; and, in case they could not find purchasers, the tickets were given to lads and servants. The attendance during the last two years of the existence of the theatre was so small, that not unfrequently the books showed a sum less than ten dollars as the receipts of an evening's performance. As a consequence the house was allowed to fall out of repair, and it soon became unsightly, the proprietors being unwilling, and the managers unable to make expenditures in its improvement. The green curtain, suspended within the proscenium arch in the days of Mr. Harper, hung there thirty-five years, becoming full of rents; the boards of the stage were splintered or warped; the box-doors would not latch, and an appearance of shabbiness pervaded the place. In winter, the building was insufficiently warmed, and, in summer, the smell of the oil lamps was so offensive as to make it unpleasant for the spectators.

The little fact that at the final performance the utterance of the name of Henry Clay was the signal for groans and hisses, well illustrates the great change that had occurred in the character of the audiences. The old patrons of the theatre, it will be remembered, were federalists, and their opponents, democrats. Now, democrats alone patronized plays, and a turbulent audience they often were. The entertainments were sometimes interrupted by the concerted action of a number of the regular attendants, who assumed an arbitrary

control over the managers. They were never regularly organized as a club, but their constant presence, their similarity of tastes, and their mischievous dispositions formed a bond of union, and gave them the appearance of an organization, to which, as some of the most prominent were shoemakers' journeymen or apprentices, was given the nickname of "The Shoemakers' Literary and Dramatic Society." It was under the guidance of these competent leaders, that, in 1828 and 1829, several attempts at rioting were made, which are recounted in the next chapter.

When the theatre was not occupied for dramatic purposes, the proprietors let it to travelling exhibitors, and upon its stage took place entertainments of every kind, from the chemical lectures of Professor D'Wolf, to the tricks of jugglers and posturers.

The Providence theatre was frequently selected for the first appearances of aspirants for dramatic honors, who, if successful, would remain upon its stage a few weeks to acquire some experience before facing a metropolitan audience. Of course, the greater number of these debutants had few qualifications for theatrical success, and, after their first night, were no more seen. A few, however, would persevere, and, in time would become accomplished actors. It is difficult to correctly assign the date of each *début*, inasmuch as the bills in order to excite public curiosity, never gave any names; merely announcing "the first appearance on any stage of a young gentleman." In the next chapter the incidents attending several of these first appearances are narrated.

## CHAPTER X.

J. T. BUCKINGHAM—ALEXANDER DRAKE—JOHN SAVAGE—HENRY FIELDING—EDWARD PADEFORD—JOHN HART—GEORGE HAZARD—SETH BALLOU—MR. HOLDEN—EDWARD QUARLES—CHARLES EDWARD BALL—OTHER DEBUTANTS—RIOTOUS CONDUCT OF THE AUDIENCE—MR. WALDEGRAVE—SPEAR.

IN the summer of the year 1803, Mr. Joseph Tinker Buckingham, whose original family name was Tinker, made his first appearance on any stage, in Providence, under the management of Mr. Harper. He was then a journeyman printer, but subsequently became famous as a dramatic critic, and as editor of the *Boston Galaxy*, the *Boston Daily Courier*, and the *New England Magazine*. He also became distinguished as a legislator and statesman, if that title can be applied to one whose parliamentary efforts were confined to the Legislature of Massachusetts. He was a native of Connecticut, and sprang from a very obscure parentage, but by dint of industry, aided by natural talents, he attained a considerable degree of distinction. As a critic he was regarded as among the ablest, and a line from his pen was sure to decide the fate of an actor, or of a book.

In an interesting work, entitled "Personal Memoirs," he gives an account of his experience on the stage; from which it appears that he adopted the life of a player for the sake of relaxation, and with the hope that he might also benefit the condition of his purse. This latter expectation was not realized; his share of the profits of Mr. Harper's scheme being so small, that it scarcely paid his board and incidental expenses. His first appearance as an actor was in the character of the *Uncle*, in the tragedy of "George Barnwell, or the London Apprentice." In a marginal note on page 54, Volume I., of "Personal Memoirs," Mr. Buckingham thus refers to the Providence company of the year 1803:

"Some readers may be curious to know of whom this company was composed, and what rank the writer held in it. The individuals comprising it, besides myself, were Bates and his daughter (afterwards Mrs. Barnes), Harper and his wife, Darley and his wife, Mrs. Simpson, mother of Mrs. Darley, Dykes and his wife, West and Perkins from the Virginia theatres, and a man named Hayman, as green a cockney as ever migrated from the sound of the Bow bells, who sometimes took the prompter's book, but was chiefly employed with a son of Bates in running the scenery, and performing the duty of property man. There was really no talent in the company except what belonged to the Bateses, the Harpers, and the Darleys. Yet, by doubling and trebling, they contrived to get up "Abelino," (then in the height of its popularity,) "Alexander the Great," "Romeo and Juliet," "The Mountaineers," "The Poor Gentleman," "Count Benyowsky," "Blue Beard," "The Point of Honor," "Child of Nature," etc. Old Doctor Shaffer, as he was called, long known as the second violin player in the Boston theatre, was the leader of the orchestra, which consisted of one fiddler beside himself, and occasionally a couple of students in Brown University, who volunteered as amateurs, with a violin and a flute, or clarionet. Readers may smile at the idea of such a company performing the pieces above mentioned; but I have seen plays as badly mangled and cut up, and played with no more spirit or propriety in Boston or New York. The receipts of this summer's work (it was work and not play) were barely sufficient to pay expenses."

The old Doctor Shaffer referred to by Mr. Buckingham, was a German; the father of Mr. Francis Shaffer, who was for many years a teacher of dancing in Providence. After the Doctor's death, the orchestra consisted of old Mr. Granger and his son, Thomas, and was never much augmented, except on special occasions, until Mr. Dinneford became lessee of the theatre, when he introduced a tolerable band of six or seven performers, led by Mr. James Meader, who afterwards married Clara Fisher, and assumed the management of the Dorrance street theatre.

In July, 1811, Master Alexander Drake, then about eleven years of age, was introduced to the stage, and sang the "Curly Headed Boy." His performance was loudly applauded, and gave evidence of the possession of those talents which ultimately placed him in the foremost rank of low comedians. He was the son of Mr. Samuel Drake, the pioneer of the drama in the west, and the uncle of Miss Julia Dean, the distinguished actress, who, as Mrs. Hayne, closed her theatrical career in Salt Lake City, and died in New York March 6, 1868. She was born July 22, 1830. The elder Drake, who enjoyed a well merited popularity in Boston and Providence, in which latter place several of his children were born, had a very large family. With them he travelled to

Cincinnati, and opened a theatre, his family constituting his entire force. He subsequently gave dramatic representations in Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky; and it was by his efforts that the drama was permanently established in the valley of the Mississippi.

In July, 1814, Mr. John Savage made his first appearance in Providence, and his *début* upon the stage. He was a native of Jamaica, and had been sent to this country to be educated at Harvard University. Becoming enamored of Miss Elizabeth White, of the Boston and Providence company, a very plain girl and a poor actress, he married her, and adopted the stage as a profession. His first attempt was a complete failure, but he persevered in his design, and at length became a respectable "walking gentleman." He afterwards played in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and, in 1817, joined Drake's company in Ohio and Kentucky. He was a young man of pleasing address, and won many personal friends, but as an actor he could not be applauded. About the year 1820, he became connected with a steamboat plying on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers; and, it is said, that this steamer once occupied six months in making the trip from New Orleans to Louisville, Kentucky. About this time he inherited a fortune from one of his West India relatives, and soon afterwards was appointed consul in Guatamala. On his return to the United States, he took up his residence in Philadelphia, where he died in 1834.

Notwithstanding the plainness of Savage's wife, he fondly doted upon her, and would not allow any one to speak disparagingly of her professional merits. A critic having been one day somewhat harsh in the tone of his comments in one of the papers concerning Mrs. Savage, was challenged by her indignant husband to mortal combat. The invitation was accepted; the belligerents had a meeting at Cold Spring, near the Central Bridge, and, the aggressor, a Bostonian, received a dangerous wound in his thigh. After his recovery he repeated his offence, when Savage fell upon him with a cow-hide, and whipped him soundly. In other cities he had several encounters with the newspaper critics, gaining nothing but hostility by his too readily displayed gallantry.

A year or two later, a young man, named Henry Fielding, an Irishman by birth, who had received a collegiate education

in Dublin, and had been employed as a lawyer's clerk in Boston, made his first appearance on any stage, in Providence. He became a good actor, and, for several years, was attached to the Boston and Providence company, but at length went to New York. About the year 1825 he returned here, and very soon had a collision with a turbulent portion of the audience, who assumed to be arbiters of the fate of the players. One evening he pronounced the word "revenue" with the accent upon the penultimate syllable, and the self-constituted critics, deciding the pronunciation faulty, insisted that he should correct it. Fielding refused, and, in an unlucky moment, asserted that there was not an American who was competent to speak the English language correctly. For this speech he was denounced, and a demonstration was made of the patriotic intention to drive from the stage the man who had insulted the American people. The manager, perceiving that Mr. Fielding's imprudent conduct had made him a multitude of enemies, cancelled his engagement. The disgusted actor forsook the stage, and, entering mercantile life, became a merchant in Rio de Janeiro.

Near this time Mr. Edward Padelford, a native of Taunton, Mass., who was then employed as a clerk in Providence, made his first and last appearance in the theatre of this town, playing the character of *Octavian* in "The Mountaineers." He was young, handsome, and gifted with a voice of considerable power and flexibility, and his success was eminent beyond precedent. It was reported that he had been led by accident to play the part he appeared in on the night of his *début*. An actor had attempted the personation a week or two before, and Mr. Padelford, condemning the delineation, thoughtlessly said that he could play a better *Octavian* himself. He was instantly challenged to make good his words; and, as he was unwilling to appear a mere braggart, he made the necessary arrangements, mastered the part, and in due time was announced. Although his first theatrical effort gave indications of capacity for a high rank in the histrionic profession, he declined all offers from the manager, and, devoting his energies to commerce, became an influential merchant.

On the 10th of July, 1826, a young man, named John Hart, the son of a worthy blacksmith, residing in Bristol, commenced a theatrical career, essaying the character of *Reuben Glenroy*,

in "Town and Country." He had youth, vigor, and a comely person in his favor, but he possessed but little of the talent essential to respectability as an actor. A party of warm friends combined to give him encouragement, but their injudicious and clamorous applause served only to secure for him the steady and relentless persecution of enemies. His supporters, in order to control public opinion, obtained permission to publish encomiums upon his acting in one of the contemporaneous newspapers; but the articles were of such a fulsome character, that they defeated their own intention, and procured for Hart volleys of hisses whenever he appeared. He played a season in Boston, and then, after discovering that success did not go hand in hand with desire, he retired from the stage, disheartened by his failure.

After he left the stage he sailed to the coast of Africa in a vessel belonging to Samuel Sandford, Esq., of Boston, in whose employ he had been as a clerk before he tried acting. He died of the African fever and was buried on the coast there.

George Hazard, an actor, who, had he lived to maturity, would have eclipsed all his contemporaries, was a native of Newport, Rhode Island. He was a grandson of George Hazard, one of the colonial mayors of Newport, and son of Nathaniel Hazard, a member of Congress. He had acquired a taste for the stage in his youth, and had played once or twice with some amateurs in his native town. On the occasion of the benefit of Mrs. Young, on the 18th of August, 1828, he came to Providence, and for the first time trod the regular stage, enacting *Osmand* in the "The Castle Spectre." He also played during the next week, *Pierre* in "Venice Preserved," and then went to Philadelphia, where he was a member of a theatrical company an entire season, creating so favorable an impression that he was engaged to play in Baltimore and Richmond. Wemyss, in his *Chronology of the American Stage*, states that young Hazard's first appearance was made in the Arch street theatre, in Philadelphia, in 1830; but this is manifestly an error. Sometime in the year 1830, he attracted the attention of Thomas S. Hamblin, who transferred him to the Bowery theatre, and entrusted him with "juvenile tragedy" and "leading comedy." He immediately won the favor of the patrons of the house, and, in a few months, became a reigning star, being invested with all the great Shakspearean characters.



Hamblin was always desirous of encouraging talent, not merely to put money in his own purse, but from a disinterested wish to develop real merit. Under his management Mr. Hazard was rapidly making a brilliant reputation, when, in the very outset of his career, he fell a victim of the small-pox. Hamblin generously erected a monument to his memory, and his loss was long mourned by those who knew his abundant deserts.

During the season of 1827 or 1828, another aspirant for theatrical honors appeared, in the person of Seth Ballou, of Springfield, who was then pursuing his studies in Providence. Becoming stage-smitten, he made one trial here, and another at the Bowery theatre, but he met with so cool a reception, that he abandoned further dramatic attempts. His failure was owing rather to a want of confidence in himself, than to any lack of ability. He was of excellent character, had a fair education, and, with perseverance, would have become a good actor.

This period was prolific in debutants. A son of Mr. Joel Adams, the keeper of India Bridge toll-house, came out in an insignificant part, and, in due course of time, was playing a very respectable line of parts. In after years he became the manager of several southern theatres, and his name was conspicuous on the bills in leading characters.

Mr. Holden, of Boston, made a first appearance upon the Providence stage in 1828, and shortly afterwards was entrusted with the part of *Sir John Lambert* in "The Hypocrite." His performance was so tumultuously hissed, that the stage manager was obliged to go forward, and demand the cause of the riotous demonstrations. No response being made, he descanted on the rights of actors, and of auditors, and assured the audience that he should not permit the rights of the company to be trampled on with impunity. They play was then suffered to proceed without further interruption. Mr. Holden eventually attained a good position in the histrionic profession, and married in Providence, a young lady of high respectability.

Yet another candidate for popular applause made a first appearance on the 30th of April, 1828. It was Edward Quarles, then about thirty three-years of age, and a paper hanger by occupation, having once been an apprentice to Thomas Webb. He had received few advantages from education but was gifted

with an intelligent mind, and a voice of great compass. He was also endowed with unusual sarcastic powers, which he wielded on all occasions with such effect as to acquire for himself a host of enemies. He had previously tried his strength as an amateur actor, and selected for his regular *début* the character of *Mawworm* in "The Hypocrite," as he cherished a bitter animosity toward certain preachers who had gained much influence over his widowed mother, and the part would afford him an opportunity for mimicking their peculiarities. He was small of stature, but so well proportioned that upon the stage his diminutive size was scarcely noticeable. His appearance had been announced a week or ten days previous, and, his name being concealed, the event was anticipated with much curiosity.

Quarles studied the part with diligence, and had the benefit of several rehearsals. He was therefore eager for the trial night. An expectant audience filled the seats, conspicuous among them being the band of despotic critics to whom reference has been made in the preceding pages. They were present in full force, and eager for action. As *Mawworm* does not enter until near the close of the first act, these restless spirits amused themselves with picking a quarrel with Mr. Holden, who played *Sir John Lambert*. After some moments of commotion peace was restored, the debutant made his entrance, and was received with a boisterous welcome. Such a *Mawworm* was never before seen! He had so disguised himself that his identity was not discovered until he began speaking. Then his voice was recognized, and he was saluted with shouts of "Ned Quarles!" and other evidences of his penetrated disguise. The poor fellow was so frightened that he forgot almost every word of his part, and was able only by the assistance of the prompter to keep up the dialogue. By dint of great exertion the play was conducted until the famous pulpit scene was reached, and then *Mawworm* had arrived at the climax of his labors. A sermon, not laid down in the book, had been written for him, which was so ludicrously absurd that it filled the house with the most uproarious laughter. Quarles had recovered from his embarrassment, and delivered the sermon with excellent emphasis and exceeding energy. It was a caricature of the productions of an itinerant sensationalist, who

was then preaching in the town, and the satire was so palpable, and withal so forcibly delivered, that the audience were in ecstasies. Quarles was called out for a speech, and a speech he made, thanking his friends for their favorable reception of his efforts, condemning the disgraceful disturbance that had occurred in the early part of the evening, and, in conclusion, saying that his first appearance on the stage should also be his last.

A year or two after his histrionic display he fell into the Cove, and was drowned.

Near this time Charles Edward Ball, a young Englishman, made his entrance upon the stage, winning so much applause that it was said that he must have previously played in his own country. He denied the allegation with much warmth. He was well proportioned, had a full-toned voice, and a clear, florid complexion. He was a thorough Briton, withal gentle and manly in his deportment, and soon became a pet of the young girls frequenting the theatre, who caused him to be presented with a dress for *Romeo*.

On some convivial occasion, Ball, in the confidence of private friendship, expressed an opinion that the British stage was superior to the American. This remark was carried to the ears of a number of young men who were at that time conspicuous in their unruly behavior at the theatre, and had already caused more than one disturbance in their efforts to dictate to the performers. They at once decided that, as Kean had been expelled from Boston for disrespect to America, a like example should be made of Ball. It was believed that some offence had been occasioned by the partiality of the givers of the *Romeo* dress; but the ostensible cause of hostility was the alleged insult to the country. This band of patriots packed the house for several evenings, and, by offensive sounds and threats, prevented Mr. Ball from being heard, until finally the manager announced that the offending actor had withdrawn from the company. Before he left town he took occasion to give a whipping to two or three of those who had been most active in their hostile demonstrations towards himself, and the next season he reappeared here without interruption of any kind. He subsequently played an engagement in New York and then returned to England.

A number of other appearances of ambitious youths might be chronicled ; but, as those whose names have already been given attracted the most attention, only their attempts have been particularly noticed.

On the 29th of May, 1827, two men, named respectively Perkins and Cowles, came from Hartford and played *Old Snacks* and *Robin Roughhead*, in the farce of "Fortune's Frolics." They were successful, and, after paying the manager the sum previously agreed upon, they returned to their homes.

It will be perceived how unruly a portion of the audience had become after Mr. Kilner had relinquished the management. Their violent conduct contributed to banish the more fastidious friends of the theatre, and hastened its decline. No principle appeared to guide the originators of the disturbances, other than a love of mischief, and they were not unwilling to improve an opportunity for making their influence felt. It was seldom that any other results attended their actions than the annoyance of the more respectable portion of the spectators ; but once at least they wrought an irreparable injury to one of the actors, a Mr. Waldegrave, who had some years previously been a member of the Drury Lane company. He was inclined, when in his cups, to boast of having played *Iago* to the *Othello* of John Philip Kemble, and of the general superiority of British institutions. It was reported that while partaking of a lunch at a well-known restaurant, he had said there was not an actor of native birth in the Union capable of sustaining the characters in which Kemble had shone. Information of this injudicious remark had been widely circulated, and, in consequence, it had been determined that the Providence theatre should be purged of such a public enemy.

In the course of a day or two, Waldegrave was obliged to undertake an important part (perhaps that of *Dr. Cantwell* on the night of Quarles's *début*) at very short notice. As soon as he entered upon the scene he was saluted with volleys of hisses, cat-calls, groans and other outcries. The stage manager presented himself to inquire the cause of such an unmerited reception. A voice from the pit in response, said that an apology was demanded of Waldegrave for insults offered by him to the country. The poor actor replied that he was innocent of such an offence, and therefore could make no apology. His refusal was accepted as a defiance, and the

demonstrations of resentment became tumultuous. Again the stage manager appeared and asked if the play should proceed, at the same time stating that if Waldegrave should be withdrawn, no substitute could be procured that evening. There were now heard cries of "yes!" and "no!" the former preponderating. When it was decided to go on at all hazards, a gentleman in the boxes pledged himself that the interruptions should cease, adding that they were disgraceful to the community. When Waldegrave made his next entrance the hisses began anew, but, upon one of the ladies making an appeal for her own sake to the gallantry of the spectators, permission was given him to finish the performance on condition that he should make an explanation at the end of the play. At the conclusion of the comedy he attempted to make the promised explanation, but was met with jibes and jeers. At length he was allowed to say that he was wrongfully accused, that he knew not what to say beyond this—that he was guiltless of any intentional insult to America; but, as he had become so unpopular, he should resign his situation, and go with his children into beggary, to which the loss of his occupation would consign him.

He remained several months in Providence, deriving a precarious livelihood from menial labor, until a benevolent gentleman supplied him with funds to remove to New York, where he lingered till 1837, dying a broken-hearted pauper. His son, a boy about twelve years old, obtained employment in a newspaper office; in time became foreman in one of the departments of the *United States Telegraph* (newspaper), and finally removed to London, where he was engaged by the *London Times* company. The daughter was taken under the protection of a gentleman of Boston, and became an ornament to society.

The rioters did not always succeed in coercing the managers to submit to their caprices. An actor of the name of Spear took umbrage at being left out of the "cast" of a popular play; and, enlisting in his favor by intrigue the sympathies of the cabal, endeavored by their aid to compel the manager to reinstate him, with however no other result than to ensure his own prompt dismissal.

An attempt by the same restless spirits to drive Henry J. Finn from the Providence theatre, also met with a signal failure.

## CHAPTER XI.

1836—1844.

THE LION THEATRE—SKETCH OF E. L. DAVENPORT—THE WASHINGTON AMATEUR THEATRE—THE DORRANCE STREET THEATRE BEGUN—MEMORIALS AGAINST THEATRES PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN—DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW THEATRE—THE OPENING PERFORMANCE—THE PROLOGUE—THE ORCHESTRA—THE COMPANY—MRS. MAEDER'S BENEFIT—ILL SUCCESS OF THE SECOND SEASON—GRETN GREEN—J. A. LITTLEFIELD—J. F. ADAMS—ANECDOTES OF BOOTH—DEBUT OF EDWARD SHALES—WILLIAM H. RUSSELL BECOMES THE LESSEE—FANNY ELLSLER—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT MANAGEMENT—E. F. KEACH—A LOCAL DRAMA—THE THEATRE BURNED—AN INCIDENT OF THE FIRE—THE THEATRE UNPROFITABLE—THE ENMITY OF THE SECOND BAPTIST SOCIETY—ELDER KNAPP—THE MISFORTUNES OF THE ACTORS.

PROVIDENCE now remained several years without a theatre, though not wholly destitute of theatrical entertainments. At various times performances were given by travelling companies in the armories on Benefit street, just south of College street. At length the Lion Theatre was opened. This was a brick building, situated on Fulton street. It had been built for a circus in the rear of the Washington Garden, and then had two entrances; one on North Union street, and the other through the Garden to Westminster street. For a number of years it had been used for performances in equitation, and for a while had offered to the public sufficient attractions to be a formidable rival of the theatre. At length its popularity declined, and it had long remained untenanted.

It was opened on the 10th of May, 1836, by Messrs. Houpt and Barrett, with a theatrical company, the stage manager being Mr. Ingersol. The initial performance consisted of "The Wandering Boys" and "The Young Widow." A prologue, written for the occasion, was spoken by Mrs. Houpt.

The company played till the 12th of July, with the exception of ten days, when they visited Newport. The stars were Booth, and J. Reeve, who were so attractive that it was believed that the time had come when Providence could sustain a good theatre. It was in this place that Edward L. Davenport made his first appearance on any stage, performing *Willdo* in a "New Way to Pay Old Debts," to the *Sir Giles Overreach* of the elder Booth. This theatre was burned by an incendiary, Sept. 12th, 1836, it being then unoccupied.

Edward L. Davenport was born in Massachusetts in 1816, and died in Pennsylvania in 1877, an American actor. He made rapid progress after his first appearance here, and was soon recognized as a leading artist in tragedy, comedy, and melodrama. He supported Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie in a wide range of characters, both in this country and in England, and played with Macready and other stars. While in England he married Mrs. Vining, herself an actress, of a family of actors. Returning about 1860, he travelled over the United States, playing in the principal cities, chiefly in Shakespearian characters and those drawn from Dickens's novels. Among his latest conspicuous representations were such widely diversified characters as *Brutus* in "Julius Cæsar," and *Bill Sykes* in "Oliver Twist." He was highly esteemed for his genial and open-hearted manners. Boyle Bernard wrote of him in 1852, as follows :

"If Mr. Forrest and Mr. Hackett have been recognized as the tragedian and comedian of America, Mr. Davenport stands between them, partaking the powers of both, if not to the extent of either. He is the tragicomic genius, which holds the same place on the stage that the romantic play does in the drama—that mixture of humor and passion which has always been a compound most agreeable to English feelings. That most plastic class of faculty which makes some sacrifice of depth in order to increase its range of surface, and which passes with equal truth from a *Benedick* to a *Romeo*, and *Jaffier* to a *Faulconbridge*, has been illustrated in our time by the genius of Charles Kemble, and will soon have no exponent so accomplished as Mr. Davenport. Thus we see his great distinction—an extraordinary versatility, in which he has no rival, with the sole exception of James Wallack, and for which his physical endowments are quite commensurate with his mental. Nature has been most liberal in her outfit of this gentleman, and his taste and artistic feeling show his sense of the obligation. He has an open, well-marked countenance, expressive eyes and pliant brow, a voice that is clear and flexible, and a well-formed, manly person."

In the spring of 1837, a small company of actors were playing in Masonic Hall, in the upper story of the Market House, but with such unsatisfactory pecuniary results that they were soon obliged to relinquish their undertaking. A short time before this disruption a number of amateurs under the direction of Jonathan M. Wheeler, G. N. Warren and G. W. Robinson obtained a license for dramatic performances in Washington Hall, near the junction of Westminster and Weybosset streets, and, having fitted up a stage, kept open for two or three months "The Washington Amateur Theatre," with some profit to themselves and pleasure to their patrons. From the outset the female performers of this company had been actresses of some professional experience; but the attractiveness of the exhibitions was much enhanced by the accession of the ladies and some of the gentlemen who had been playing at Masonic Hall. A range of boxes was then built, for admission to which the charge was fifty cents, while that to the other parts of the house remained as before, at twenty-five cents. The audiences became larger and the receipts showed a corresponding increase. At this time some persons made representations to the mayor that the performances were not given by amateurs, but by real actors, and consequently that the license was forfeited. An investigation was at once set afoot; the objection was decided to have been well taken, and the license was revoked. John B. Gough, the well-known temperance lecturer, then a journeyman bookbinder, was the principal comedian of the "Washington Amateur Theatre."

Another long time passed, and Providence had no theatre, although the need of one was seriously felt. Accordingly, a number of public-spirited gentlemen decided to erect on the east side of Dorrance street, between Pine and Friendship streets, one that should be a credit to the city for its appearance and capacity. They appointed a building committee, consisting of Messrs. James G. Anthony, John Gould, John A. Littlefield, John W. Richmond, and Ezra Dodge, who selected Mr. James Bucklin as the architect, under whose direction the work was begun on the 28th of May, 1838.

This enterprise from its inception was exposed to the slings and arrows of enemies. As soon as the ground was broken, by the workmen, Mr. Samuel Wheeler, a very well meaning



citizen, conceived the plan of committing the city authorities to hostility towards the projected theatre ; and, with this design, he zealously labored in procuring signatures to a memorial, in which the Board of Aldermen were prayed "to take such immediate action in relation to the erection of a new theatre, as would indicate a determination to refuse all licenses for such purposes." This memorial was presented on the 18th of June, and the consideration of the subject was then postponed one week. On the 25th of the same month, the board again assembled, and found that during the intervening time many additional signatures had been obtained to Mr. Wheeler's document, swelling the whole number to about six hundred. The Second Baptist Society, whose house was directly opposite the site chosen for the theatre, also presented a memorial, representing in substance, that they had erected a house of worship in a retired and peaceful situation, in which they had hoped to hold their meetings undisturbed, but that the theatre would prevent their doing so, and impair their rights as a Christian society ; and also setting forth that theatrical amusements are opposed to the true interests of the community at large. After a discussion of the subject, the board passed a resolution "that, however much the members may regret that a building for theatrical performances is now erecting, they consider it premature and inconsistent with former usages to give their opinion as to the propriety of granting licenses to theatres or anything else, until a request for the same is made by persons interested."

The work upon the new theatre now advanced with rapidity, and competent managers were desirous of obtaining a lease as soon as it should be completed, provided a license could be procured. On the 22d of October, a petition was presented to the Board of Aldermen from Mr. James G. Maeder, the eminent musician, representing that he and others had become lessees of the new building called "Shakspeare Hall," on Dorrance street, for the purpose of theatrical representations ; that he had engaged a stock company respectable in talent and character, who were well aware that they could not hope to be sustained by the public, unless they should maintain a reputation for professional and private good character ; and that he intended to enforce such regulations as would conduce to good order, especially for-

bidding the sale of wines and strong liquors upon the premises, and excluding all persons of notoriously bad character ; and asking a license for one year. After a full hearing of the parties interested, the license was granted on the conditions named in the petition, subject to such regulations as the board might thereafter deem expedient. One hundred dollars for the use of the city, and ten dollars for the state, constituted the fee exacted. It was stipulated that performances should not be given either on Saturday or Sunday evenings, and that they should always be terminated before twelve o'clock at night. The sheriff of the county and two police constables were appointed to attend at "Shakspeare Hall" to keep order, at the expense of the manager.

The theatre was a stone edifice, one hundred and ten feet in length, by sixty-five in width ; and its stage was a little more than fifty feet deep. The exterior was plastered and pointed in imitation of granite, and had pilasters in front and a granite basement. The principal external decoration was a medallion bust of Shakspeare. The interior was beautifully decorated by accomplished artists ; the ceiling representing a dome with a sun in the centre, surrounded by the signs of the zodiac in gold. This was the work of Mr. Heister, then eighteen years of age, who has since had the reputation of being the ablest scenic artist in America. The fronts of the boxes were exquisitely painted in panels. The auditorium contained, besides a pit, two tiers of boxes and a gallery of semi-circular form, and could seat about thirteen hundred spectators." The act-drop represented a moonlight view of the Capitol at Washington. The entire cost of the theatre was twenty thousand dollars.

The inaugural performance took place Oct. 29, 1838, and consisted of "The Soldier's Daughter," and "A Pleasant Neighbor." An elegant prologue, written by Mrs. Sarah H. Whitman, was recited by Mrs. Maeder. The following lines heralding the advent of the drama, were enthusiastically received :

" And now she comes with all her shadowy train,  
To hold her court within this gorgeous fane—  
Here her bright banner fearlessly unfurls,  
And scorns the pointless shaft the bigot hurls—  
Pure are her means, her high intents sublime,

To cherish virtue and deter from crime,  
With loftiest theme to rouse the languid heart,  
And stern reproof with subtle grace impart;  
To wake the noble love of well-earned fame,  
And teach the glory of a deathless name.  
She shows how heroes lived and martyrs died,  
And fills the exulting breast with god-like pride,  
That such high energies to man are given  
To conquer earth, and ope the gate of Heaven."

The managers were James G. Maeder and Thomas Flynn ; the leader of the orchestra was at first a Mr. Woods, who was succeeded by Mr. Clemens, and under him were two violins, two clarionets, two horns, a trumpet, a trombone, and a double bass ; forming the largest and best drilled orchestral band that had ever been heard in Providence. Whenever operas or other musical pieces were performed, Mr. Maeder played the piano-forte in the orchestra.

The prices of admission were one dollar to the boxes, fifty cents to the pit, and twenty-five cents to the gallery.

The company contained Messrs. Gates, comedian, Nickerson, Flynn, Fenno, McDonald, McCutcheon, Merryfield, and Edwin, also Mesdames Maeder, Rider, Fletcher, Mathews, and others, constituting a combination better suited for the lighter drama than for tragedy or standard comedy.

Several injudicious regulations adopted by the management were offensive to the public, and resulted in a decrease of patronage soon after the opening, as well as a disagreement with the newspapers. One regulation, common enough in other cities, was novel here, and occasioned no little displeasure on the part of the visitors to the house. By this rule the front seats of the boxes were reserved for such persons as should engage a whole row. It appearing that the public dissatisfaction was in a great measure caused by the mismanagement of Mr. Flynn, that gentleman dissolved his partnership with Mr. Maeder, and moved away. Mr. Maeder at once made vigorous exertions to win the popular favor, and, at the same time, to maintain a high standard of excellence in all the performances. The stars of the season were Miss Shirreff and Mr. Wilson, in English opera, and the tragedian Hamblin, whose engagement was a great success.

On the 7th of January occurred the benefit of Mrs. Maeder, formerly the celebrated Clara Fisher, when the house

was densely packed by a brilliant assemblage. The beneficiary, besides the large sum of money resulting from the tickets, received as a gift from her numerous admirers, a gold chain with a medallion, and an emerald ring. A few days previously, she had presented to the stockholders for the adornment of the box lobby a bust of Shakspeare, and a representation of Shakspeare's house, modelled by her father.

Mrs. Shaw shortly after this event fulfilled a star engagement, drawing remunerative audiences; and, when the season closed on the 6th of February, 1839, it was found that after paying all the expenses, a small profit had accrued to the manager.

Mr. Maeder began a second season in April, and closed on the 24th of July. Although he produced actors of celebrity, such as Mr. and Mrs. Sloman, Ellen Tree, Mlle. Augusta, Miss Clifton, H. J. Finn, and M. and Mme. Taglioni, his receipts seldom equalled the disbursements; and, as he became involved in debt, he concluded not to obtain a renewal of his license. A complimentary benefit was tendered to him by the stockholders, after which he removed to New York. No incident worthy of note occurred during the period in which he held the managerial *baton*, except, perhaps, a certain coincidence trivial in its nature, but which at the time occasioned some little amusement—we allude to the fact that on the 10th of June the farce of "Gretna Green" was performed, and the character of *Jenkins* was sustained by Mr. Fenno, who a few hours before had actually made a runaway marriage of his own.

Mr. John A. Littlefield attempted in September to keep the theatre open, but after a few weeks' profitless experience, found himself compelled to abandon his design. His successor was J. F. Adams, who, with a poor company, gave support to a succession of stars, viz: Forrest, Ranger, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Charles Kean, J. Wallack, Booth, Dan. Marble, Hackett, and the elder Vandenhoff with his daughter. He brought his season to a termination early in June, 1840. The business of the stage had been ably conducted by W. H. Smith, who made every effort to conceal the deficiencies of the "stock;" but several times when a "full" piece was to be produced, or some star more exacting than ordinary was to be supported, temporary engagements were made with actors from other cities.

Attended by such satellites, stars came and shone; but Booth blazed with dazzling glory, fully sustaining the reputation he had long before achieved. His advent had been anxiously awaited, and his appearance crammed the theatre to its utmost capacity. He more than satisfied every expectation, playing with wonderful power, and nightly winning round upon round of applause from the enthusiastic spectators. Despite his low stature and certain other physical drawbacks, his genius supplied altitude, and gave him absolute power over those whom he willed to subdue. Be the audience ever so apathetic in the earlier scenes of a tragedy, let Booth present himself and utter a word, and, quick as the lightning's flash, the spectators roused themselves and thundered their welcome. In every scene he reigned absolute master, actors and audiences quailing before his fiery glances, and breathless with terror when he gave unrestrained flow to the multitudinous passions that swelled the breast of royal *Richard* in his death struggle. With a whisper he could chill the blood, with a glance he could extort obeisance, with a gesture he drew tears. His acting may be analyzed, his intonation may be imitated, his appearance may be described, but the magnetism of his manner is indescribable—it is incomprehensible.

This great actor was a singular compound of eccentricities, absurdities, virtues, and talents—his own enemy—yet the friend of humanity, and as tender of animal life as the fastidious Brahmin. Delighting in the glare of the playhouse, he yet cherished a fondness for a pastoral life. Well read in professional lore, and conversant with the most elegant poetry, he chose for his companions the dissipated, the worthless, and the uneducated. Devoted to self-indulgence, he still revered the rules of godly living, and would at any time forsake his revelries to read to appreciative listeners chapter after chapter from the Bible. Himself without any profession of religion, he revered piety in others, and was indifferent to the form of worship, if only true devotion was apparent.

It has been disputed whether Booth was subject to fits of insanity or not, and some of his freaks would seem to give tokens of a disordered intellect, while others evinced too much method to justify such a conclusion. During this en-

gement he lodged at the City Hotel, and his strange demeanor was a constant source of amazement to the proprietor and to the guests. One night he did not make his appearance at the theatre in season to begin the performance, and Mr. Adams, the manager, guided by one of the clerks of the hotel, went to his room and found it locked. To their calls and knocks there was no response, but as it was possible that he had fallen asleep, the clerk climbed upon the roof of an adjoining piazza, and peered through the window. The room was apparently empty. Then the corridors and offices were visited without success, and the manager was about to go away in disappointment, when the clerk, to make assurance doubly sure, again scaled the piazza, entered the window and looked under the bed. There lay the missing tragedian, calm and sober, quietly meeting the gaze of the intruder with his own. He at once consented to proceed to the theatre, and, after a few preparations, followed the manager, who, relying on his promise, had hastened back to his post. The clerk, unperceived, followed Booth, and saw him in his progress by the route he had often before walked, accost every person he met, and asked to be directed to the Providence theatre. When he reached his dressing-room he lost no time, but was soon upon the stage, hailed with rapturous delight by the audience, whose patience he had so severely tried.

Instances of a similar nature might be multiplied, but two or three will suffice. One evening when he was to play *Iago*, he was missing at the hour when the play was to begin. The audience was unusually large, and the manager being unwilling to change the programme, and thereby incur the risk of many persons demanding the repayment of the entrance money, resorted to the expedient of playing the farce as a first piece, and in the meantime searching for Booth. By good fortune a gentleman was seated in the boxes who was an intimate friend of the great actor, and knew all his haunts. The straits of the manager having been made known to him, he procured a carriage, and proceeded to Morris Deming's sailor boarding-house. There the tragedian was found, a little the worse for his potations, and carousing with his host, whom he designated "a learned Theban—a sage philosopher." He was immediately taken to the theatre, his dress

was speedily changed, and he not only acted his part, but played it superbly.

At another time he evaded the watchful eyes of his friends, and, after an ineffectual search in the various bar-rooms of the city, was at length discovered sitting on Peck's wharf, with a parcel of crackers, from which he was feeding a number of hogs which he had collected together in that neighborhood, where they then roamed at large.

During an engagement at this theatre, or at the "Lion," he disappointed the audience, and was found late in the evening, blindly making his way through the town of Johnston. When he was overtaken by his friends, he yielded to their wishes, and readily returned to Providence in their company.

He was often perfectly sober when indulging in these vagaries, and his acquaintances differed as to their cause. It can not, however, be concealed, that he sometimes did indulge his appetite for intoxicating liquors to an immoderate extent, but not so frequently as is popularly believed. It is doubtful if he ever was so completely overcome by drink as to be incapacitated from playing a familiar character. As soon as he came before the foot-lights and began to speak, his aspect changed, and, as the play progressed, he regained over all his faculties sovereign sway and masterdom. He abandoned himself so entirely to the passions of the part he personated, that he produced such a degree of mental excitement as would neutralize the effects of other stimulants.

About five o'clock one afternoon, when the play-bills were advertising that he was to play *Richard the Third* in the evening, he had drunk in some bar-room to excess, and was lying on a bench, to all appearances helplessly intoxicated. A college student chanced to see him in this besotted condition, and two hours later attended the theatre for the purpose of witnessing the lamentable failure he was sure would occur; but he was delighted and amazed to behold Booth tread the stage with firmness, and perform that masterpiece of acting in such a manner as to electrify the audience, and to leave upon his own mind an ineffaceable expression.

As Booth advanced in age he yielded more and more to the cravings of his appetite, and some reliable friend was in constant attendance to protect him from the allurements of his boon companions. He could, however, at any time, be tem-

porarily withdrawn from their society by an invitation to read the Scriptures, as before remarked; and those who had been present when he complied with the request, are enthusiastic in their descriptions of the impressiveness of his delivery. There was a religious vein in his nature which was continually showing itself, whether he was sober or under the influence of his potations. One morning before sunrise, late in the autumn of 1839, two gentlemen started for Seekonk to hunt rabbits. As they approached India Point Bridge, they observed that the door of a small bar-room, kept in that vicinity by one Rawson, stood open at that unusually early hour, and they entered for the purpose of procuring some cigars. As they passed in, an unexpected sight presented itself. Before a picture of General Washington a small boy was kneeling with hands joined, and by his side was the tragedian, Booth, engaged in teaching the boy the Lord's Prayer, solemnly dictating each separate petition, and so intent upon his occupation that he did not observe the entrance of the spectators. The hunters stood awhile, regarding in silence this strange display, and, after having made their purchase, continued on their way, leaving the actor, then haggard as from a revel, still engaged in imparting his lesson in religion. How Booth chanced to be so occupied and in such a remote place, they never ascertained.

Mr. Nathan Porter, since an eminent lawyer in San Francisco, California, was a member of the company this year (1839). He was very successful in "Yankee" characters, and a farce, written by himself to display to the best advantage his peculiar talents, was frequently performed. For his benefit, March 12, 1840, the Boston tragedian, Edward Shales, appeared as *Gloster* in the fifth act of "Richard III." This Shales was a desperately stage-struck amateur, who, being puffed up by the flattery of mischievous acquaintances, believed himself thoroughly qualified for the highest walks of the drama. He had attempted to play two acts of the same tragedy on the 11th of the previous June, and had been pelted from the stage by the jeering audience. Undaunted by his failure, he was resolute in his determination to make a second trial of his powers. Mr. Porter therefore procured his services for the benefit, at the same time circulating accounts of the dramatic treat which he intended to offer. A



good house was in attendance, who gave the debutant a fair chance for a hearing ; but he proved to be so utterly incompetent, that they employed the time in laughing at his ridiculous failure.

Shales soon afterwards repeated the performance, and the audience went to the theatre, anticipating a merry time. The actors had had their sport with him before that of the spectators began, and had amused themselves with decking him with a novel apparel for the great part he was to play. One foot wore a boot, the other was dressed in a sandal. The remainder of his attire was as absurd as could be devised, embracing the costumes of widely remote periods, each portion as incongruous with the rest as possible. As soon as he presented himself to the view, he was saluted with shouts of laughter from the house, composed wholly of males. His efforts to speak were hailed with renewed peals of laughter. Soon missiles began to fly. Turnips, apples, eggs, cabbages, and other articles were thrown at him, littering the stage on every side. The uproar reached its climax when a man in one of the upper tiers was seen to stand up, swing a cat by the tail around his head two or three times, and then let it fly through the air. Straight to the mark went the cat and lighted on the back of Shales, who, though a little staggered by the shock, stood his ground like a hero, shook off the animal, and waited for the din to cease. An apple fell near him. Picking it up, he coolly ate it until some degree of silence was restored, when he attempted the part, and after some further interruptions, he was permitted to finish the performance.

On the 14th of June, 1841, William H. Russell, a native of Bristol, Rhode Island, who had been the treasurer of Burton's National theatre in New York, became the manager of the Providence theatre, and kept it open with a succession of stars, viz. : Mrs. Maeder, Ranger, Burton and Hamblin, until September 10th. In October he reopened with a newly decorated auditorium, and a new act-drop, the work of Mr. H. Isherwood. His company was far from being a powerful one, although several of the performers were not destitute of merit. These were George Jamieson, Fenno, Mrs. Russell, (formerly Miss J. Shaw), Mr. and Mrs. Kemble, and Miss C. Shaw. Mr. and Mrs. Creswick were subsequently added.

The principal attractions were T. D. Rice, Edwin Forrest, Mrs. Shaw, and the spectacular drama of "The Naiad Queen."

On the 19th of November, Fanny Ellsler, the celebrated danseuse, was engaged for one night at an expense of six hundred dollars. Although the house was well filled, and the prices of tickets had been raised to meet the increased expenditure, the manager lost money by the engagement; but Miss Ellsler the next morning returned him one hundred dollars of the sum she had received.

The season was brought to a close in February, 1842, Mr. Russell having become involved in debt by the undertaking, although the stockholders, who had adopted the plan of receiving, in lieu of a definite sum, a certain percentage of the receipts of each performance, obtained a larger rent than had ever before fallen to their share, and, on the 4th of March, advertised a dividend.<sup>1</sup>

On the 30th of May, 1842, Messrs. Jamieson and Isherwood obtained the lease for a short term, but were soon glad to relinquish it. They were succeeded in February, 1843, by Wyzeman Marshall, who, soon after the engagement of Booth and Mrs. Shaw, closed the doors for lack of patronage.

In February, 1842, the celebrated Doctor Dionysius Lardner delivered five lectures on scientific subjects, in the theatre, to appreciative audiences. In September Mrs. Fitzwilliam and Buckstone gave three successful performances there with a small company brought from Boston, and, in June, 1843, Jerome, Gabriel, and François Ravel, with ten other pantomimists, performed several times. The theatre, however, was not regularly open till July 3, 1843, when the principal members of the National company came from Boston, under the management of W. R. Blake and G. J. Spear, and maintained a series of dramatic entertainments for five or six weeks, during which time Hamblin reappeared as a star, and the

<sup>1</sup> The destruction of the books of the theatre makes it impossible to present a statement of the financial condition of the management for any period, except for the first season of Mr. Russell's lesseeship. The treasurer's account for those thirteen weeks is yet in existence, and from that we ascertain that the receipts for sixty-seven performances amounted to \$7,849.58, averaging \$117.15 each night. The rent, being seven and a half per cent., amounted to \$588.23. The opening night brought in \$164. The best nights were June 21st, on the occasion of Mrs. Maeder's benefit, when nine hundred and sixty-four persons were present, paying for their admission \$26.75; July 5th, when twelve hundred and thirteen spectators were present, paying \$124.25; and August 16th, being the first night of the Equestrian drama of "Mazeppa," when \$364.25 were taken. The smallest house was that of July 2d, when the entire audience comprised ninety-two persons, the receipts being \$22.75. It will be observed that the house was seldom more than one-fourth filled.

managers gave a benefit performance for the sufferers by the great conflagration in Fall River.

Among the performers in this *troupe* was Mr. Edward Frank Keach, a young gentleman who had several years earlier been engaged in commercial pursuits in Providence. He had fostered such a decided taste for the drama, that, after a preliminary trial of his abilities in Boston, despite the remonstrances of his friends, he had gone to Baltimore and begun the arduous career of an actor. There he met with but indifferent success, and soon returned to the north, playing on the 25th of June, 1841, one night in this city. He soon joined the National company in Boston, and, after a long experience, achieved an honorable position in the profession of his choice. He was the principal actor at the Boston Museum for several years, winning general admiration by his attention to duty, his grace, and his talent. In 1860 he became the manager of the Museum, and his peculiar qualifications for that most responsible position became at once apparent. He devoted his entire energy to the sole purpose of making that theatre the foremost establishment of its kind in America; endeavoring by undeviating attention to the minutest details of the multifarious duties of a manager, to render every performance an elegant and rational entertainment, and, at the same time, indirectly profitable for the instruction of the audience. In the selection of plays he aimed chiefly at effectiveness of incident and picturesqueness of stage appointments. He bestowed much attention on correctness of costume, in which department he found an able coadjutor in Mr. Thomas Joyce; and he insisted on the literal delivery of the text of the dramas, taking unwearied pains at rehearsals to have the "business" of the scene well understood, and the pronunciation of the actors uniform, and in accordance with the best orthœpists. He had a wonderful faculty of imparting his own spirit to those surrounding him, and, in a little time, he had a band of assistants intent on the fulfilment of their individual parts in his general plan. In one year after his induction into the managerial chair, the Museum became a source of pride to the Bostonians, and its reputation was widely extended. Its stage was decorated with beautiful scenery, its actors were selected for their reliability and talent, its music was of the highest character, and

the entire *mise en scène* free from the anomalies and anachronisms so common, even in the metropolis, as to be accepted as inevitable.

For three years Mr. Keach devoted himself to the duties of the management, at the same time playing the leading parts in juvenile tragedy and comedy ; but his incessant toil shattered his health, and he was sent to Europe for rest. After a brief sojourn in London and Paris he returned home somewhat improved in health, and bringing for the benefit of the Museum the fruits of his travel ; but, unable to refrain from the absorbing pursuits so dear to his heart, he suffered a relapse and soon died. His death was an irreparable loss to the Museum and to the whole dramatic profession. It is but reasonable to believe that had his life been spared for fifteen or twenty more years he would have enjoyed a national reputation, and would have been acknowledged as a great public benefactor.

Mr. C. H. Saunders was also attached to this company. He was a good actor and a prolific dramatist. A play written by him called "Amy Cranston," founded on events in Rhode Island history, was performed on the 2d of August, but did not enjoy a protracted run.

On the 18th of December of the same year, Mr. Thomas B. Russell opened the theatre for a winter season, with a company small in number, and far from efficient in point of talent. His stage manager, who was also his leading actor, soon left him, and, as the manager had had but little experience in "stage business," he was seriously embarrassed in the production of plays. By good fortune he was enabled to secure the aid of Mr. J. Gustavus Burrough, a young gentleman of the city, who possessed the necessary qualifications, and chanced at this time to have just returned from a professional visit to Baltimore. Thus reinforced, Mr. Russell protracted his season for several weeks, during which time he produced as stars Booth, December 25th ; Charlotte Cushman, January 10th, 1844 ; Chippendale, Buckstone, Mrs. Fitzwilliams, Miss Josephine Clifton and Miss Bradbury ; but bad success attended his efforts, and he, too, removed to another field.

The theatre now remained desolate until July, 1844, when Andrew J. Allen, who had been a member of Mr. Harper's

company in 1809, brought a company of players and began a summer season. He produced Brougham, Forrest and Miss Clifton, and William H. Smith. The enterprise resulted unfortunately; Mr. Allen forsook Providence, and the theatre was again tenantless.

It was destroyed by fire on the morning of Oct. 25, 1844. At the time of the disaster it was occupied by Doctor Lardner for astronomical lectures. The fire destroyed his famous planetarium, which occupied the entire pit, and was valued at thirteen thousand dollars, besides other apparatus of a costly description. The origin of the fire was never ascertained. Some ascribed it to the furnace used with the little steam engine which gave motion to the planetarium; but the majority deemed it the work of an incendiary, impelled by fanaticism or by a love of malicious mischief. The total loss, exclusive of insurance, was \$52,000. Dr. Lardner's planetarium, which was destroyed, had been twenty years in construction. During the last four years of this theatre, Mr. G. H. Greene (now connected with the Boston and Providence Clothing Company) was the treasurer.

During the conflagration the flames caught the spire of the wooden meeting-house opposite, which, however, was by great exertions preserved, and also ignited a coffin warehouse in the neighborhood. The doors were broken open, and the crowd who were watching the burning theatre and listening to the shouts of the firemen and the clangor of the alarm-bells, were startled at the unexpected sight of coffins borne on the shoulders of men running to and fro in search of a place of safety.

The Dorrance street theatre had always been an unprofitable investment for the stockholders and for the managers; to the former because often unrented, and to the latter for several causes. Every exertion had been made to attract the citizens, but they never made a liberal response. The first year had been the best. Then, Mr. Maeder, whose education and proficiency in music had given him a predilection for operatic drama, had given particular attention to their production,<sup>1</sup> endeavoring to please the most fastidious taste; but he met with nothing but disaster. His successors had ex-

<sup>1</sup> At one time the orchestra contained among its members one of the Counts Palatine of the Rhine, who had been compelled by political troubles to leave his country and gain a livelihood by the exercise of his musical talents.

perimented with spectacles and with stars, but all had abandoned their attempts in despair, and one of them for some time was an inmate of the debtor's prison. The knowledge of these failures could not be concealed, and there had been no candidates for the lease for a long while before the fire.

The ill success of the theatre may be in part attributed to its inaccessible situation. It will be remembered that Dorrance street did not then extend from Weybosset street to Westminster street; and the passengers through the latter thoroughfare, not having before their eyes the inviting aspect of the building with its gay lamps, were often forgetful of its existence.

The situation of the theatre proved to be unfortunate in other respects. It faced the Second Baptist Society's meeting-house, on the other side of the street, and met from them opposition even before the foundation was laid, as has been before stated. The society were no little chagrined that a license had been granted for theatrical performances, and their hostility to the drama in general was succeeded by enmity to the Dorrance street theatre in particular. They tried to suffer inconveniences from its proximity, and held meetings with great frequency on unusual nights; but were unable to find themselves annoyed, as they expected. The indifference with which their behavior was treated exasperated them, and they became more demonstrative of their opposition. The bell was rung long and often, with so evident a design of disturbing the dramatic entertainments, that Mr. Russell once lost patience and silenced the ringing by appending to his bills a notice that the hour of performance at the theatre would be regularly announced by the bell in the steeple opposite.

The most disagreeable of their demonstrations was made by preaching against the stage and the actors in such loud tones that the sound, entering the windows of the theatre, made it difficult for the company in the boxes to hear the plays. A revivalist of stentorian lungs and untamable zeal, of the name of Knapp, was engaged, and he "bore testimony" with such violence against the sinfulness of the theatre, particularizing the performers by name, that he was near occasioning breaches of the peace. A distinguished tragedian when playing an engagement here, was the special object of the di-

atribes of this zealot, who indulged in his personalities with such virulence that he so angered the actor, that he entered the meeting-house, and, in the face of the worshippers, rebuked his assailant. Although the theatre was the chief object of attack, Knapp dealt his abuse with no unsparing hand towards other victims; and, at length, to escape the vengeance of an exasperated crowd who surrounded the meeting-house, he was obliged to flee through a window.

After the flight of this apostle, unseemly manifestations of hatred gradually became more rare, and had wholly ceased some time before the theatre was burned.<sup>1</sup>

Other causes coöperated to render the theatre unprofitable. The best friends of the drama were the stockholders, but from these the managers received nothing; for all of them had free passes to the performances, and they were so numerous that the best seats were sometimes respectably full, while the treasury was almost empty. Those stockholders who seldom went to the theatre were in the habit of letting their tickets to others, and thus kept money from the manager, who soon found himself compelled to depend for support upon that part of the play-going public which could not be allured by any attraction other than the most expensive. To be able to procure stars, it was necessary to retrench in the stock company, and, consequently, stars at length became indispensable. The star system once adopted,

<sup>1</sup> As early as 1813, or 1814, this society, then popularly known from their situation as the "Muddy Dock Baptist Church," manifested towards theatrical amusements an intolerant spirit, which once culminated in a riotous proceeding on the part of some of their young and enthusiastic converts. A number of lads under the direction of Mr. Benjamin Henry Talbot, a young man of considerable literary ability, opened a little amateur theatre on the north side of Pine street, not far from the "conventicle." They fitted up their hall with no little taste, erected a stage, and supplied it with a stock of scenery sufficient for all their probable wants. Their scheme was immediately denounced in unmeasured terms by the pastor of the meeting opposite, a very peculiar man, strong in his prejudices, and not unduly stocked with profane learning. The town sergeant also gave the young actors to understand that the town council would probably consign them to the bridewell, if they should persist in their intention, and actually enact plays. The lads, notwithstanding the semi-official nature of this intimation, did produce plays, beginning with "The Merchant of Venice," and gave performances several nights, without molestation from the town authorities. The pastor redoubled his denunciations, and probably nothing of a more serious character would have occurred, had not the amateurs in retaliation produced an original satiric drama entitled, "Muddy Dock in a Stew; or, the Parson without Breeches." This was more than human weakness could bear; and one night several of the devotees of the flock, headed, it was said, by one or two of the deacons, entered the little theatre after the lads had retired to their homes, and destroyed the scenery, lamps, costumes, and every piece of property that had been used for such an unholly purpose as playing. Satisfied with this indulgence of their indignation against an object, which they verily, though ignorantly, believed to be an engine of Satan, they came away rejoicing that virtue had triumphed. No legal proceedings were ever taken against the perpetrators of this act of vandalism.

the decline of the theatre became only a question of time. Although often large audiences were gathered within the walls, the receipts were all taken by the stars, leaving no profit for the manager. Sometimes, when it was currently reported that the audiences were very large, and that the theatre must be doing well, the actor whose reputation had proved so attractive, had taken as his share not only all the receipts, but had actually left the treasury in a worse condition than it had been before his appearance. The town, after having had a taste of good acting, was so indifferent towards the stock company, that when they attempted to play without extraneous aid, the receipts scarcely paid for the lights and the advertising. At such times the poor actors were reduced to dismal straits, and their salaries being in arrear, they were destitute of provisions for the passing hour, and harassed by the clamors of their creditors.

The spring of 1842 was peculiarly disastrous to their interests. During the few nights when the theatre was open, the nightly receipts when divided gave them a scanty subsistence; but this last resource failed when political troubles resulting from the Dorr insurrection occupied public attention, and compelled the closing of the theatre. They were then left without occupation and without means of any kind. A few of the superior actors were enabled by friends to remove to other cities, but starvation confronted the others. Without credit, and without money, all doors were shut against them, and, with the assent of the proprietors, eleven of them betook themselves to the theatre, and there lived several weeks under the stage, maintaining life and hope in privation and suffering. The dressing-rooms served them as sleeping apartments, the hard banks and sofas of the property-room were their beds, and the green-room stove gave them warmth, and cooked their poor supplies of food, procured by the sale of their clothes, trinkets, costumes, and books. During this time their spirits never failed them, but at the period of their greatest destitution they remained cheerful and joyous. Indeed, it may be doubted if in any of the households of the city there was then as much happiness, as in the cellarge of the Dorrance street theatre.

At length this family was divided. Remittances from brother actors in distant theatres came, and enabled several



to remove, and the remnant owed their deliverance to the liberality of John A. Littlefield and Walter R. Danforth.

The destruction of the theatre was not so complete as to overthrow the walls, which now exist, presenting nearly the same external appearance as before the fire, while the interior, rebuilt, is used for various mechanical purposes.

## CHAPTER XII.

1846—1860.

HOWARD AND FOXES—THE PROVIDENCE MUSEUM—MR. WILLIAM C. FORBES BECOMES LESSEE—LOLA MONTEZ—UNCLE TOM'S CABIN—THE MUSEUM BURNED—COMPLIMENTARY BENEFIT—FORBES'S THEATRE—ENGAGEMENT OF FORREST—PRESENTATION OF PLATE TO MRS. FORBES—PYNE & HARRISON OPERA TROUPE—THE NAIAD QUEEN—PRESENTATION OF PLATE TO MR. FORBES—ENGAGEMENT OF LOLA MONTEZ—ANECDOTES OF LOLA MONTEZ—MR. AND MRS. D. S. PALMER—A SEASON OF MISFORTUNES—COMPLIMENTARY BENEFIT TO MR. FORBES—DESTRUCTION OF FORBES'S THEATRE—WILLIAM C. FORBES—DEATH OF MRS. FORBES—THE VARIETIES THEATRE—SWARTS'S HALL—PINE STREET THEATRE.

FROM 1846 to 1850 regular dramatic performances were given by a small company, under the management of G. C. Howard and G. and J. A. Fox, at first in Brown Hall, in South Main street, and afterwards in Cleveland Hall, in North Main street. These managers met with unequivocal success until the opening of the Providence Museum, with superior resources, gave them a formidable competitor for public patronage. They relinquished their lease in July, 1850, but dramatic entertainments were continued in the same hall by E. W. Bradbury, their principal actor, for several months later. The performances had consisted principally of melodrama and farce, and had been respectable in character. Such performers as Mr. Howard, the Foxes, G. C. Germon, E. Varrey and E. W. Bradbury, were at the same time members of the company, and were able to give an entertainment very satisfactory to the audiences who nightly filled Cleveland Hall; the price of admission being only twelve and a half cents. There is an old gentleman in town, who, bred in the notions of the most strictest sect of the day, had always regarded the theatre as the most dangerous of the entrances to Erebus, and often expressed this con-

viction in the presence of his family. The dreadful news was communicated to him that his son had clandestinely gone to spend an evening at "Howard and Foxes." Bent upon rescuing the lad from destruction, he entered the hall, and, while he was searching for his son, the curtain drew up and the play began. He became deeply interested in the incidents of the drama, and remained, forgetful of the purpose of this, his first visit to a theatre, until the conclusion of the performance, and then the two went home together, the father unable to reproach the son for being attracted by a diversion, by which he himself had been equally fascinated.

"The Providence Museum" was situated in Westminster street, fronting on Orange street. It was opened Dec. 25, 1848, under the management of William C. Forbes, he being employed by the proprietors, who had originated the plan of erecting a hall for dramatic performances as an appendage to a museum of curiosities. They completed the hall, but never furnished the latter portion of the attractions. The auditorium was lighted by gas from Almy's gas works, which was the name given to the building constructed within the walls of the Dorrance street theatre. The opening bill consisted of "The Honeymoon," *Duke Aranza* by Mr. Forbes; *Rolando*, A. Andrews; *Jacques*, J. Colwell; *Juliana*, Mrs. Forbes; *Volante*, Miss Kinlock; a *Pas de deux* by the Misses Emmons; and the farce of "The Turnpike Gate." The hall contained a parquet and a gallery, and the price of admission to all parts was fixed at twenty-five cents. By the terms of the contract with the manager, tragedy was never to be played at this theatre, the proprietors believing that a strong prejudice against that form of drama prevailed among the stricter sort of citizens. In two or three weeks after the opening night request was made by some influential person that "The Stranger" should be performed, and the *Mrs. Haller* of Mrs. Forbes made so deep an impression that the proprietors assented to the production of a regular tragedy. "Jane Shore" being accordingly played, the performance was so much admired that its repetition was demanded, and all restrictions were removed from the acting of tragedy.

Disagreements between the proprietors and the manager soon afterwards occurred, and, it having become apparent that the speculation would be unprofitable, the house closed March 28, 1849.

Mr. Forbes immediately made proposals for a lease of the Museum in his own name for five years, and was successful. The yearly rent agreed upon was three thousand dollars. During the negotiations most of the actors remained in town awaiting the result, and, to maintain themselves, gave several entertainments in the public halls. On one of these occasions Joseph Cowell introduced upon the stage his grandchildren, Kate and Ellen Bateman. It has been said that this was the first appearance in a dramatic performance of these young girls, who afterwards became famous for their precocious histrionic talents.

Mr. Forbes reopened May 16th, with a good company, containing Joseph Cowell, D. S. Palmer, C. W. Hunt, A. R. Phelps; E. F. Keach, Mesdames Forbes, Hunt, and C. Mes-tayer, and the Misses Carpenter and Gertrude Dawes, danseuse, and others. Mr. Forbes being disabled by a sprain on the opening night, his place was supplied, for several weeks, by Mr. Joseph Proctor. The house was kept open until July 23d, the only stars of the season being Proctor, Derr, in equestrian drama, and Wyzeman Marshall.

The second season began Sept. 1, 1849, and closed June 17, 1850. During the recess a circle of boxes had been partitioned from the parquet, and other improvements had been made. The price of entrance to the side boxes was fifty cents, to the rear boxes thirty-seven cents, to the parquet twenty-five cents, and to the gallery twelve and a half cents. Mr. W. A. Arnold became the treasurer, and occupied that position during the whole time of Mr. Forbes's management, winning many friends by his courteous manners. The company was strengthened by the addition of E. Varrey, H. O. Pardey, John Drew, W. H. Meeker, Bradshaw, Ward; Mesdames Yeoman and Ward; and Misses Eberle and Julia Leonard. The stars produced were Herr Cline, Mdle. Blangy, Booth, J. H. Oxley, Mrs. Maeder, Derr with his trained horse, Mrs. Mossop, the Martinetti family, George Vandenhoff, Mrs. Farren, the Seguin opera *troupe*, T. D. Rice, and Proctor.

The third season began Sept. 2, 1850, and closed July 5, 1851. W. B. Chapman, Emily Mestayer, and the Misses Wilmot were additions to the company. The following stars appeared: C. D. Pitt (two engagements), J. E. Murdock,

Mrs. Mossop, Mr. and Miss Nickerson, J. Drew, Booth, Miss Davenport, Miss Kimberly, J. Proctor, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Adams, Mr. Neafie, Mc.K. Buchanan, Mr. and Mrs. J. Gilbert, and F. S. Chanfrau.

Francis S. Chanfrau was born in New York, 1824; he received a good education and went to learn the trade of a carpenter. He joined a dramatic society of young men and at once begot such a taste for the stage that he accepted the position of "super" at the Bowery Theatre, where he soon became a favorite, especially from his imitations of Mr. Forrest. He made his first hit as *Jerry Clip*, in "The Widow's Victim," and followed this with "Mose, the Fireman;" but his most permanent success was *Kit*, in "The Arkansas Traveller." In this piece he acted till his death, in 1884. *Kit* was to the American public with Chanfrau what *Falstaff* was to Hackett; *Bardwell Slote* to Florence; *Rip Van Winkle* to Jefferson; *Solon Shingle* to John E. Owens; *Colonel Sellers* to Raymond; *Sir Anthony Absolute* to John Gilbert, or *Major Wellington de Boots* to John S. Clark.

The fourth season began Sept. 6, 1851, and ended July 10, 1852. Messrs. Wharton, J. D. Grace, J. G. Hanley, S. Johnston, and P. Cunningham, and Miss Graham were the new appearances. Star engagements were played by Fanny Wallack, Mr. McVicker, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, Melinda Jones, Booth, J. R. Scott, Julia Turnbull, Mrs. Warner, Mr. and Miss Barrett, Mr. Neafie, Charlotte Cushman, G. V. Brooke, Lola Montez, Mr. Collins, Mrs. Sinclair, and George Vandenhoff. During the engagement of Miss Cushman the price of tickets was advanced fifty per cent. The engagement of Lola Montez extended to only one night, March 20th, when the price of admission was doubled, and the choice of seats was sold at auction. The highest price bid was for a box containing twelve seats, which brought twenty-three dollars premium. The whole of the parquet was bought by a speculator at an advance of twelve and a half cents on each seat, and he made a considerable profit by disposing of them to the throngs who contended for admission.

The fifth season opened Sept. 4, 1852, and closed June 4, 1853. Several performers made their first Providence appearances this year. These were C. Stuart, W. Leffingwell, Emma Taylor, Emily Waldegrave, and Mrs. Kinlock. The

stars presented were Julia Dean, Anna C. Mowatt, Miss Kimberly, Ellen and Kate Bateman, J. R. Scott, Goodall, Susan and Kate Denin, Mrs. Warner, Mr. and Mrs. J. Drew (Mrs. Drew being the Mrs. Mossop of former seasons), Miss Fitzpatrick, J. Oxley, Lysander Thompson, the Rousetti family with John Sefton, and W. Marshall. The great success of the season was the production on the 10th of January, 1853, of H. J. Conway's dramatization of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It was played four weeks and one night consecutively, and until February 7th; was revived February 17th, for three nights; May 3d, for six nights; and June 3d, one night for the benefit of H. O. Pardey, who, as the hero of the drama, had been the centre of interest. This play has been performed in every theatre of the northern states, and has made the fortunes of several managers; but, it may be confidently asserted, that in no other theatre has the principal character been so effectively sustained as in the Museum. Mr. Pardey, although he loathed the part on account of the necessity of blacking his face, won for himself a more permanent fame as *Uncle Tom*, than all the other triumphs of his life could have procured him. The play attracted large audiences until its withdrawal, many of the spectators being present at several of the representations, and not a few of them being persons who visited the Museum because it was not a theatre, to see "Uncle Tom's Cabin" because it was a "moral drama."

The sixth season began Sept. 3, 1853. In addition to many of the favorites of former years, the manager had secured the services of L. P. Roys, John Dunn, H. Linden, F. Hardenburg, and Isabella Andrews, the Misses Kendall (dancers), and Mrs. C. A. Adams. Star engagements had been played by Kate and Ellen Bateman, Sir William Don, Bart., and T. D. Rice; and the spectacular drama of "Paris and London" had run nine nights with such remunerative returns, that it was believed it would prove as great a success as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when the Museum was destroyed by fire on the night of October 27th. The fire was the most disastrous of all with which the city had been afflicted, property of the value of two hundred and forty thousand dollars being consumed. It originated in a haberdasher's shop in "Howard Block," separated only by a narrow alley from the

Museum building, and, in a few hours, communicated itself to the Museum, burning it to the ground. Mr. Forbes lost his properties and costumes, of the value of twenty-five hundred dollars, being the entire savings of his five years of management. He paid his indebtedness to all the members of his company to the day of the disaster, and discharged them. Before their dispersion they tendered him a complimentary benefit, which took place November 3d, in Westminster Hall, when the bill consisted of "The Honeymoon" and "My Precious Betsey," with dances by the Misses Kendall. These plays were acted in costume, but without scenery.

"Forbes's Theatre" was a commodious edifice, raised by George A. Howard, upon the site of the Museum. It contained a parquet, a row of boxes called the dress circle, a second tier called the family circle, and a gallery. The stage was well provided with accommodations for the preparation of scenery, and the working of the necessary mechanism. The proscenium arch had an imposing sweep, and contained a tastefully decorated box on each side for the use of the performers.

The auditorium during the first season presented a cheerless aspect, as the walls were unpainted, owing to a misunderstanding between the manager and the proprietor of the building, who had purchased it in the process of construction, subject to a contract made by the former owner to build a theatre provided with necessary scenery and fixtures, and to lease the same for five years to Mr. Forbes, but not stipulating for the painting of the walls. A lawsuit grew out of the matter, causing much ill feeling between the parties.

This theatre was opened Sept. 6, 1854, with an admirable stock company, whose performances proved so attractive that Mr. Forbes was able for about five months to dispense with the assistance of stars. On the 12th of February, 1855, Edwin Forrest made his first appearance in eleven years, opening his engagement with "Hamlet." The prices were advanced thirty-three per cent., and so great was the desire to witness the acting of the greatest tragedian of the day, that his stay was protracted from the two weeks, originally contemplated, to three. The theatre was visited by large numbers from the neighboring towns. On the night he played *Macbeth*, one party from Woonsocket secured one

hundred and twenty tickets. The house had been intended to accommodate fifteen hundred people with seats, yet more than seventeen hundred witnessed the performances of "Richelieu," "Macbeth," and "Othello." The audiences increased as Mr. Forrest proceeded to enact the plays written specially for himself, and the house overflowed on the first nights of "Metamora," "Jack Cade," and "The Gladiator"; each of which was performed three times during this engagement, the smallest audience being present at each third performance, when they numbered about twelve hundred. On the 17th, Mr. Forrest was prevented by hoarseness from appearing in "Damon and Pythias," as advertised; but he remained one day after the expiration of his three weeks, and played the part to an excellent house. By the terms of his agreement he received half of the gross receipts; yet so great was his attractiveness that the management, after deducting all expenses, made large gains.

Forrest was followed by Mrs. Farren, J. Proctor, and J. Bennett. On the 23d of April, Mrs. Forbes received a complimentary benefit, when a beautiful silver tea service, consisting of eight pieces, was presented to her by her many friends.

E. L. Davenport began an engagement April 27th, in his celebrated personation of *Hamlet*, and played two weeks a round of romantic and tragic characters, repeating *St. Marc* four times. On the evening of his benefit, Miss Fanny Vining made her appearance in "Love and Loyalty," and "A Morning Call."

He was succeeded by the Pyne and Harrison English opera troupe, containing Louisa and Susan Pyne, W. Harrison, Borroni, Horncastle, and a small though efficient chorus. All the fashion of the town crowded the theatre during this week of opera, and the prices of admission, though raised to double the usual tariff, were not too high to exclude even some of the wealthiest of the citizens. The college authorities relaxed their rigorous rules, and gave the students permission to visit the theatre so long as nothing but opera was played; and many of them who would have been promptly expelled had they been detected at the representations of "Hamlet," or "Ion," or "Comus," were present unprohibited at the performance of "The Beggar's Opera," the most immoral, perhaps the



only immoral play that was ever produced—one in which all the *dramatis personæ* were thieves and prostitutes, and through the representation of which, were it given without the music, no decent person would sit.

It is to be mentioned to the credit of Louisa Pyne, that when tenders were made to her of large sums of money, one party guaranteeing five hundred dollars, if she would give a concert one afternoon during her stay in Providence, for the gratification of those whose principles would not permit them to hear her in a theatre, she peremptorily declined, saying that she was engaged to Mr. Forbes for the week, and felt bound to give him all her services during that period.

The theatre was closed from May 26th to June 18th, when Charlotte Crampton played two weeks, and the season was terminated July 7th.

Charlotte Crampton might have been one of the most famous actresses of the day, were it not for unfortunate habits. She was born in 1816, and made her *début* at the age of fifteen, in Cincinnati. She was, at that time, a *petite* and lovely brunette, with a voice wonderfully strong for so slight a girl, and with all the requisites for what is now called an emotional actress. But she chose the more robust types, and particularly enjoyed playing *Hamlet*, *Shylock* and *Richard*. She was acknowledged to be more than ordinarily good in male parts, and in the west, was called the Little Siddons. Celia Logan says she had, naturally, more talent than Charlotte Cushman, (?) but unlike the greater actress, this other Charlotte, hot-headed and warm-hearted, threw away both her money and her affections, disappointed the managers, disgraced the profession, and ruined herself. One bitter cold night, in Boston, after playing *Mazeppa* to a crowded house, she jumped on her horse in stage costume and rode home through the streets, followed by the rabble. After her star had set, and she could get no engagements, she fell into poverty, but was befriended by a Boston lady, who discovered that the actress was also a fine French and Latin scholar, and obtained pupils for her. Now, for a period, she tried to reform, signed the pledge, and joined the Baptist church. Her temperance lectures in Hanover street are still remembered as being productive of great good. But her reformation was only transient, and before the war broke out, she was leading her old life again. Her son

joining the army, she, although now more than a middle-aged woman, became a vivandiere and followed her boy's regiment through the campaign. Her last appearance here was in November, 1872, in the support of Edwin Booth. She died in Louisville, Oct. 5, 1875. Her last appearance on the stage was in Macauley's Theatre, Louisville, Sept. 22, 1875, in the company with John McCullough, Harry Eytinge, W. N. Griffiths, R. G. Scott, E. F. Goodrich, Hattie Russell, Frank Bosworth, Ed. Marble and Ada Rehan.

The season of 1855-6 began September 5th. The manager had decorated the interior of the house, and had secured the services of a large company of twenty-three actors, the orchestra, machinists, and other assistants swelling the entire number to fifty. The principal additions were Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Prior, L. P. Roys, E. C. Prior, W. H. Finn, and Mrs. M. A. Tyrrell. The succession of stars commenced with Mr. and Mrs. G. C. Howard with their daughter Cordelia, for three weeks, who were followed by E. L. Davenport and Fanny Vining, the Pyne and Harrison *troupe*, eight nights to excellent houses, the Boon children, Eliza Logan, J. W. Wallack, Maggie Mitchell, from January 15th to February 2d, to immense audiences, J. Proctor, E. F. Keach, (one night), W. Marshall, and Mrs. Farren. The theatre was closed from May 17th to June 15th, when it was reopened and performances were given until July 5th.

Maggie Mitchell has appeared in Providence more than any other living star. For nearly forty years she has been coming to this city, and most of her visits have been very profitable ones. Upon one occasion, in 1870, when she played in Harrington's Opera House, every seat upon the lower floor was sold before the doors were opened, and also about one-half of the seats upstairs. She was born in New York in 1832, and may be said to have been born on the stage, because she was used as a child on the stage before she could walk, and when she could walk took a child's part in the Old Bowery Theatre before she was five years old. She made her *début* as an actress as *Julia*, in "The Soldier's Daughter" at Burton's Chambers Street Theatre. She achieved a fair success in various cities as the *French Spy*, etc., but her great *rôle*, with which her name will be most permanently associated, is *Fanchon*, in which she appeared for the first time at Laura Keane's Theatre in 1862.

The great success of the year was the production of the spectacular drama of "The Naiad Queen," which proved very profitable from April 14th to May 10th, Miss Anna Cruise enacting *Lurline*. On the occurrence of Mr. Forbes's benefit, March 20th, six pieces of silver plate were presented to him, the gift of the ladies of the city.

The season of 1856-7 opened September 1st, and continued to June 6, 1857, when the company visited New Bedford, returning to Providence during the first week in July. The principal performers were G. H. Griffith, D. S. Palmer, E. Varrey, Loveday, E. C. Prior; Mesdames Forbes, Palmer, and Baker; and Misses G. Kinlock, and I. Andrews. The stars were J. Drew, J. Proctor, Miss Davenport, G. E. Locke, J. Oxley, J. R. Anderson and Agnes Elsworthy, Lola Montez from February 12th to February 17th, Mrs. McMahon, Miss Kimberly, Maggie Mitchell, Forrest for one week, and E. L. Davenport.

The most attractive of the stars was Lola Montez, Countess of Lansfeldt. Very little accurate knowledge of this lady's career was possessed in Providence; but there was scarcely a person who had not often read, or heard of her figuring in disgraceful notoriety at the Bavarian court, and of her frequent castigations of journalists, who had, by giving currency to scandals concerning her life, incurred her resentment. Authentic information was scarcely required; for, where rumors had lacked definiteness, imagination furnished ample supplies of details. The capacity of the theatre was tested to the fullest extent on her opening night, a little more than two thousand spectators being present. In that immense audience there were but few who did not expect to behold a figure largely developed and muscular, and a face displaying the multifarious charms which had enslaved her royal suitor, but yet bold in its expression. She appeared—her face—Spanish in its outline—pale and thin, and her only trace of beauty her lustrous eyes; her expression modest and intellectual, and her performance chaste and graceful, though indicating talent of no high order—a disappointment of the purient expectations of those who during her engagement crowded into unwonted seats. She remained one week, drawing full houses to the last, living during the day in retire-

ment, reading religious works, and steadily, calmly, hopefully preparing for death, having full persuasion that consumption had sapped the pillars of her life, and that she was soon to make her final exit. With this fearful conviction resting on her mind, she spoke freely of her past life, and, though she acknowledged grievous faults and numberless short-comings, she characterized as baseless slanders the aspersions so lavishly bestowed upon her character. Here she persistently asserted to those whose good opinion she prized, her innocence of the black offences charged against her, alluding to her calumniators with a disdain as haughty as she had evinced when a few years before in Boston, in a letter to an offending editor, she defied her accusers to the proof.

The company at the theatre did not then contain many actors of talent. Among those whose personations were least successful, was the "second old man," who, though of excellent character, had never been designed by nature for the stage. His peculiarities were a monotonous voice and a perpetual sawing of the air with his hand. He soon became a mark for the boys in the gallery, who found a pleasure in ridiculing and mocking him. This was their nightly sport, and, as hunting is one of the natural delights of mankind, they soon found ready coadjutors in other parts of the house; and, even those who took no part in the persecution, mightily enjoyed the excitement. Poor Duffy (this was the name of the actor) became grievously depressed, but redoubled his exertions to please. His increased activity was so ludicrous, that the boys were frantic with delight, and their joy culminated one night during the engagement of Lola Montez, whose indignation was aroused at the brutality of their behavior. After a successful *coup* on her benefit night, she was called before the curtain, and, instead of delivering the conventional speech tendering thanks, she broke at once into invective, uttering those short, sharp, and ringing upbraidings, which can never be forgotten by those who heard them. She told the audience, now still from curiosity and shame, how she had observed the effect of their cruelty on an inoffensive man, whose simplicity of character and singleness of aim had endeared him to those who knew him best. At first, she said he thought that some remissness on his part had incurred their displeasure, and he gave his whole time and all his

thoughts to perfecting himself in his duty, but with so little avail that greater insults had been heaped upon him, and he had that evening announced his intention of forsaking the stage and leaving Providence. "Boys," said she, "his heart is broken—and by you! I have tried to persuade him to remain, and have assured him that you have no malice towards him, but he says he shall go. Boys, would you ruin the old man! Let me tell him that it is your wish that he remain; may I?" Such plaudits as broke from the throng, now sensible of the wickedness of their conduct, that theatre never heard before.

Mr. Duffy, however, did not appear again. A paper signed by many citizens, requesting him to remain, and assuring him of protection, was carried a few days afterwards to him in Boston, where he had gone; but he had not the resolution to return; and, in a few months, it was currently reported that he was dead.

At this time, in a little cottage on Fulton street, lay dying one of the most graceful "light comedians" on the stage,—David S. Palmer. Though in the last stages of consumption, and daily growing weaker, he would not admit the thoughts of dissolution, and his faithful wife dared not communicate to him the dreadful tidings. For a long series of days she had pursued her laborious avocations at the theatre, and had ministered to all the necessities of her husband, and her two infants. Her beauty was a continual source of pleasure to the spectators, and to them her life seemed joyous, while care and sorrow were robbing her of health, and preying upon her beauty. The peculiar claims of this family being confided to Lola Montez, touched her sensibilities, and thenceforth, while she remained in Providence, she was a daily visitor in their household, provided generously for their needs, bore her part in the offices of the sick-room, and, with gentle sympathy, subdued the stubborn will of the dying man, preparing the way for other consolations. When she left Providence grateful hearts remembered her, and blessings followed her. "Sick, and ye visited me." Poor Palmer, however, lived but a short while, and was buried before the end of the season in Grace Church Cemetery. His friend and benefactor did not long survive him, and she too passed from a cruel world to find mercy and plenteous redemption.

Palmer had been a *protégé* of Mr. Forbes, by whom he had been introduced to the stage, and encouraged until his merit as an actor was generally recognized. During his last illness, he was constantly visited by Mrs. Forbes, whose sympathy for the sufferings of the members of the dramatic company won their love and admiration, and evinced the noblest attributes of the Christian character. Her presence brightened his household—it was she who communicated his hopeless condition to Lola Montez; and she it was who brought to his side the clergyman whose ministrations soothed his dying moments. Nor was the manager himself remiss in his attentions to the sorrowing family of the poor actor; but he continued his salary while he lived, and then from his own little means defrayed the expenses of the funeral. Mrs. Palmer, at the end of the season, removed from Providence, and, in a few months, her death was recorded in the public prints.

The season of 1857–8 opened on the 26th of August. The manager made great efforts to provide attractive performers, beginning with the Keller *troupe*, who were followed by Mr. and Mrs. G. Pauncefort, Miss Davenport, F. S. Chanfrau, J. Proctor, the Ronzani ballet *troupe*, Maria Quinn, Mr. and Mrs. Drew, Sallie St. Clair, McK. Buchanan, Mr. and Mrs. Howard, J. Sefton and his daughter, Alice Grey, and Maggie Mitchell. This year was one of great financial depression in all parts of the country, and theatres suffered severely. Forbes's theatre was closed two weeks in January, and two weeks in March; and no performances were given by the company after the 28th of April. Notwithstanding the unintermitted exertions of the manager, almost every performance occasioned a loss, and, when he closed, his entire savings had disappeared. No star could fill the house, and even Maggie Mitchell, whose previous engagements had always proved exceedingly remunerative, lost her prestige. Many a night the play was acted to houses varying from ten to twenty dollars, when the nightly expenses ranged from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars. At length, Mr. Forbes called the company together, and, having made known to them his inability to pay full salaries, proposed that the larger stipends should be reduced, while the others should remain unaltered, liberty being given to any performer to withdraw whenever he could procure a better engagement elsewhere.

This plan was adopted, and performances were regularly given until the diminished receipts of the treasurer rendered it impossible to continue them. The personal friends of Mr. Forbes gave him a benefit in the month of March, when "The School for Scandal" was played, Mr. John Gilbert personating *Sir Peter Teazle*. A very large audience was in attendance, and the excellent acting of all the performers on this occasion, was for a long time afterward a subject of general remark. The language of the comedy seemed to scintillate with brightness, each sentence cracking like an electric spark. The actors, stimulated by the unusual spectacle of a full house, were in perfect sympathy with the audience, each reacting on the other, and the play throughout warmly applauded, closed like a *feu de joie*. The valet, *Trip*, never a great part, elicited that night for Mr. G. Sydney, who played it as none other could, an outbreak of admiration, while the great screen scene was as enthusiastically received as though it had never before been witnessed.

Later in the spring, under the auspices of Mr. Forbes, the Boston Theatre Company came and performed "Guy Mannering" one night, with Charlotte Cushman as *Meg Merrilies*, and E. L. Davenport as *Henry Bertram*. The night was stormy, yet the crowd was very dense.

This was the last year of Mr. Forbes's management, and it had been so disastrous that he was unwilling to attempt another season. The theatre remained untenanted several months, with the exception of five nights, when it was occupied by the Cooper English opera company, with Anna Milner as *prima donna*; and of two nights, when Italian opera was produced for the first time in Providence. The edifice was burned on the evening of Nov. 15, 1858, the fire having communicated from Howard Block, where it had originated.

William C. Forbes, who for ten years had maintained the theatre with credit to himself and to the city, was no stranger to the citizens when he opened the Museum. A native of the State of New York, he had been sent in his youth to Newport for the benefit of his health, and, in 1825, he visited Providence. Becoming attached to the place, he made it his abode, and soon attended the theatre. The play was to him a revelation of delights before undreamed of, and produced

so deep an impression on his mind that he burned to be an actor. A young man named Parsons, who subsequently became an actor of repute, and is now a prominent Methodist preacher in Kentucky, was similarly affected by a desire for theatrical fame, and they both were accustomed to meet in the woods behind the Cove and practise their elocutionary powers by moonlight.

After a little while young Forbes determined to gain a footing on the stage, and, as he was nearly destitute of means, he started on foot for Albany, where a theatre was open, and where several kind friends resided. When he had accomplished half of his journey he reached a village inn, where he proposed to lodge for the night. In a conversation with the landlord, he learned that the villagers had few opportunities of enjoying any public amusements, although concerts were much liked by them. It then occurred to him that by an entertainment he might replenish his purse, and he applied for the large room of the inn. This the landlord agreed to furnish, provided the performance should be followed by a dance. Mr. Forbes thereupon made a number of manuscript posters, advertising a selection of songs and recitations, and conspicuously announcing the Terpsichorean festivities with which the evening would conclude. These bills were well distributed, and brought a good audience, who endured the singing, and warmly applauded the recitations. The pecuniary results were so satisfactory that the young man was enabled to accomplish the remainder of the distance in the stage-coach. Mr. Forbes made his *début* at Albany, and, at length, after some experience of the vicissitudes of an actor's life, he found himself in Jamaica, playing the first line in tragedy and comedy. On his return to the United States, he was engaged by James H. Caldwell as a star, and made his first appearance in that capacity at the Camp street theatre, in New Orleans, as *Virginius*. His reputation extended, and he made the tour of the western theatres with unequivocal success. At the opening of the Tremont theatre in Boston, he became its leading actor, and made his mark in many characters. After his marriage, he managed for ten years theatres in Savannah, Charleston, Columbia, and Augusta, all at the same time, except when at intervals the Charleston theatre was shut. Notwithstanding his avocations in these remote places, he came to Provi-



dence nearly every year, and, when the Dorrance street theatre was building, Henry J. Finn, to whom its lease had been tendered, proposed to him a partnership for the purpose of undertaking its management. Doubts regarding the probabilities of its success deterred them from this enterprise; but, in 1849, the city had received such an increment of population, that the support of a theatre seemed to him feasible. He thereupon secured the Museum, and, when he finally left Providence, he had attained an enviable reputation for professional skill, business capacity, benevolence, and integrity.

Mr. Blake pays the following well-merited tribute to Mr. Forbes and to some of the prominent members of his companies:

"It is scarcely necessary to dwell with more particularity upon the incidents of his management, and to speak of the tone which he gave by his well-considered regulations to the stage while under his charge; for these are matters yet fresh in the recollections of the people of Providence—bright spots, like the green circles that betray the fairy revels of the moon-lit nights. The play-goers of to-day will not soon forget the actors to whom they owe so many hours of pleasure, and they still rejoice as they observe the success of their old favorites achieved in other cities—as they see their own Hardenburg attain distinction in the home of fastidious critics, and others who in times gone by began their stage experience in Providence, take prominent positions in the best theatres of the metropolis, and hold them against all competitors. They need no chronicler to revive their memories of Isabella Andrews, that charming "soubrette;" of Varrey, whose dry humor would wring laughter from a cynic; of Frank Drew, whose *Triplet* was a masterpiece of serio-comic acting; of John Dunn, the funniest of low comedians; of John Drew and W. J. Florence, who here began that career which led them to eminence; or of Forbes himself, the high-minded manager, and staunch friend, whose every glance was a benediction, and whose kind acts were as the sands of the sea, numberless."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Forbes's hatred of oppression was manifested in a signal instance when soon after his induction into the managerial chair in Providence, he learned that Mr. Macready had been driven from the Astor Place Opera House by rioters. Mr. Forbes instantly tendered him an engagement, from no expectation of profit, but to mark his detestation of the course pursued by the instigators of the riot, and his sympathy with Mr. Macready. Although Macready declined the offer, he duly appreciated the generous spirit in which it was made.

While we may not linger over the trivial, fond records of their lives, or yet on those of Prior, of the Palmers, of Emma Taylor, of Georgiana Kinlock, of Mrs. Varrey, or of the hospitable, big-hearted George Sydney, all of whom have passed away from earth, we can not thus dismiss the name of Mrs. Forbes, who, too, has gone to her long rest, mourned by the friends of her heart, and lamented also by those who knew her only as an artist. In her public capacity she was admired for her conscientious fidelity to every duty, for perfectness in the text of the parts she played, and for unsurpassed taste in dressing her characters. In all her personations she was more than respectable, in some admirable, in a few incomparable; and it was the unvarying testimony of all the stars, that in no theatre in their course were they as satisfactorily supported by any other leading lady as by Mrs. Forbes. Although after several years the public, familiar with her renditions, might have sometimes desired other performers for the sake of variety, none could ever characterize her as incompetent in any part, while as *Widow Cheerly*, as *Mrs. Haller*, as *Elizabeth* in "Richard III.," and as *Helen* in "The Hunchback," she was acknowledged to be without compeer. In the latter character the frequenters of the theatre always exulted in her great success, which in some instances has made the *Julia* of the evening, albeit a star of lustre, carry away divided honors. And who that had the luck to see can forget her *Elinor Mowbray*, played so beautifully for the judicious few, but *caviare* to the general.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1857 a dramatic company, under the direction of George H. Griffith, endeavored to maintain vaudeville performances in a small wooden building on the corner of Pine and Orange streets, but after a few weeks of experiment the doors were closed, and the company disbanded.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Forbes's professional career after her departure was observed with much pleasure by the friends she left. Proceeding to London, she appeared as a "star" at the Haymarket Theatre, then under the management of J. B. Buckstone, opening as *Widow Cheerly* to a house filled almost to suffocation. Her success was decided and triumphant, and she was pronounced by the London papers the most meritorious American actress who had appeared in England since Charlotte Cushman. She played the same part every night of her first week applauded to the echo; and, her engagement, which could not be protracted beyond two weeks by reason of arrangements made long previous, was alike profitable to herself and to the management. She then played in the principal provincial theatres before she sailed for Australia. During her residence in London, she and Mr. Forbes were frequently the guests of Miss Louisa Pyne, then the manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

In the winter of 1858 and the summer of 1859, a small company, under the management of Mr. George Wyatt, performed on the corner of Pine and Dorrance streets, in Swarts' Hall, a building which had been the meeting-house of the Second Baptist Society, from whom came the memorial to the Board of Aldermen respecting the Dorrance street theatre, to which allusion has been previously made. The chief attractions of this place were the talents of the Misses Julia and Helen Wyatt, young girls whose precocious ability and pleasing manners made them general favorites.

This hall, altered into a theatre, and called the Pine Street Theatre, was opened Sept. 5, 1859, with "The Soldier of France" and "Married Life," under the management of E. Varrey and W. A. Arnold, both well known to the *habitués* of the Museum and of Forbes's theatre. This establishment was so unfortunately situated and so inconveniently arranged that the enterprise soon proved so unprofitable that Messrs. Varrey and Arnold surrendered their lease. The company was, however, kept together, and performances were given during the winter months by the actors, under the direction of Messrs. Johnston and Petrie, the principal performers. Upon the stage of this theatre Maggie Mitchell, Fanny Herring, George Jamieson, Cordelia Howard with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Wallack, J. W. Booth, and C. W. Coudock played star engagements. The stock company, though limited in numbers, was respectable for talent and character, embracing, besides Mr. Varrey, Robert Johnston, Petrie, Mr. and Mrs. Marden, Mary Mitchell, H. Linden, Mrs. Warden, Miss Gillett, and several others of lesser note. The audiences decreased until at length the receipts became too small to pay for necessary fuel, and then the Pine Street Theatre was closed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1860-1864.

NAME OF PINE STREET THEATRE CHANGED—SKETCH OF ADAH ISAACS MENKEN—CLOSING OF THE PROVIDENCE THEATRE—OPENING OF THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC—SKETCH OF CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN—SKETCH OF SENORA ISABEL CUBAS—SKETCHES OF LUCILLE AND HELEN WESTERN—DAVENPORT AND WALLACK—SKETCH OF J. WILKES BOOTH—"VESTVALI, THE MAGNIFICENT"—MESSRS. TOMPKINS & THAYER LEASE THE ACADEMY.

THE Pine Street Theatre closed Tuesday evening, Jan. 3, 1860, with "Rob Roy" and "Santa Claus." It was, however, reopened March 19, 1860, by the Cooper English Opera *troupe*, with the "Barber of Seville," Annie Milner being the *prima donna*. Myers and Boniface took the management March 28th, and ran the "Octoroon" for a few nights. April 9th, Adah Isaacs Menken came for four nights in the "French Spy." This lady had a checkered career. She was born in a small village near New Orleans, La., June 15, 1835. Her father died when she was seven years of age, and Adah and her sister made their *début* as *danseuses* at the French Opera House, New Orleans, with great success. During her career as a *danseuse*, Adah mastered the French and Spanish languages. She remained at the opera house, New Orleans, then joined the Monplaisir *troupe*, visiting Havana, and became a great favorite with the *habitués*. She was called the "Queen of the Piazza." She next visited Texas and Mexico, and played a brilliant engagement at the leading opera house in Mexico. Returning to New Orleans, she retired from the stage and published a volume of poems called *Memories*, under the signature of "Indizina." While in Galveston, in 1856, she married Alexander Isaacs Menken, a musician. She then made her *début* at the Varieties Theatre, New Orleans, in "Fazio," during the season

of 1858. She soon left the stage again and studied sculpture in Columbus, Ohio. On the 3d of April, 1859, she was married to John C. Heenan, from whom she was divorced by an Indiana court in 1862. She went back to the stage, playing in New York and then through the south and west. In October, 1861, she was married to Robert H. Newell (known in the literary world as "Orpheus C. Kerr"), and on July 13, 1863, she sailed for California, accompanied by Orpheus. After playing to magnificent houses in California, she sailed for England April 22, 1864, where she also played. She was divorced from Mr. Newell in October, 1865. Returned to America in 1866, and played in New York, then through the West. On the 21st of August, 1866, she was married to James Barclay in New York. She then made another trip to Europe, playing engagements both in England and France. On Monday, Aug. 10, 1868, she died in Paris.

The theatre was rechristened as the Providence Theatre, and on Oct. 7, 1861, was opened by J. C. Myers with the "Siege of Manassas." During his management he had as stars J. Wilkes Booth, Joseph Proctor, S. W. Glenn, and Lucille Western. The final closing was on July 4, 1862, R. E. J. Miles being the last star to appear there.

Upon the ruins of Forbes's Theatre a new structure arose, bearing the name of "Phenix Building," in which there was a capacious hall, provided with a stage and some of the appliances of a theatre. This was called the Academy of Music, and it continued in existence for nearly twenty years, much of the time being the principal theatre in the city. It was long and narrow, had only a parquette and gallery, and the entrance was up two flights of stairs. If there had ever been a fire, or anything to create a panic, while a performance was being given there, loss of life would have almost certainly resulted.

Upon this stage in 1861, several dramatic companies appeared, the large majority of them under the management of either A. Macfarland or J. C. Myers. Among the most notable was Charlotte Cushman, who came June 3d and remained for five nights. She had in her support Messrs. John Gilbert, J. B. Studley, and others, and during her engagement she appeared in "Henry VIII.," and also impersonated *Romeo*

to the *Juliet* of Viola Crocker, *Portia*, in the "Merchant of Venice," and *Meg Merrilies*.

This estimable lady and great artist was born in Boston in 1814, of old Puritan stock. After she had left school, and having a good voice, she resolved to make her appearance as a public singer. Having received thorough instruction from the best masters, she made her first appearance in public at a social concert given in Boston at No. 1 Franklin avenue, March 25, 1830. During Mrs. Joseph Wood's engagement in Boston, Miss Cushman sang at one of her concerts. Mrs. Wood was so pleased with her voice—which was a fine contralto—that she advised her to turn her attention to singing on the stage, and Mr. Meader, the husband of Clara Fisher, brought her out as the *Countess of Almaviva*, in "The Marriage of Figaro," at the Tremont Theatre, Boston, April 8, 1835. This was her first appearance. She shortly afterwards sailed for New Orleans, where she came very near losing her voice, having seriously impaired it by trying to force it up to the soprano register. This was the cause of her taking to the stage, and becoming one of the greatest actresses that ever walked the boards of any theatre in this country. Her next appearance was at the Bowery Theatre, New York, in 1836, as *Lady Macbeth*. From the Bowery she went to the Park, where she became the leading actress. She next visited Philadelphia, and made her first appearance at the opening of the National Theatre, Aug. 31, 1840, as *Lady Languish*. Before her talent could be recognized at home, she was obliged to visit Europe, where she found critics to acknowledge her as one of the greatest *artistes* of the day. In 1844 she sailed for Europe. On the 13th of February, 1845, she made her *début* at the Princess Theatre, London, as *Bianca*, in "Fazio." She was supported by Mr. Macready. After three or four years' residence abroad she returned to her native land, and made her first appearance at the Broadway Theatre, New York, Oct. 8, 1849, as *Mrs. Haller*. In 1852 she played a farewell engagement throughout the States, and returned to Europe again; after a sojourn there of five years, she returned to the United States, and made her appearance at Burton's Theatre, New York, Sept. 28, 1857, as *Bianca*. She made her appearance in Philadelphia, May 21, 1858, at the Arch Street Theatre, as *Mrs. Haller*. On the 16th of August,

1850, she played at Liverpool, and, on the 30th of the same month appeared at Niblo's Garden, New York—just two weeks after her performance *three thousand miles away*. On the 7th of July, 1858, she sailed from New York in the steamship *Persia*, for Europe, and, after an absence of two years, returned to New York, and, during the month of September, 1860, made her *début* at the Winter Garden. For the benefit of the Sanitary Committee, on the 17th of October, 1863, she played *Macbeth* at Grover's Theatre, Washington, to an overflowing house. She crossed the ocean sixteen times; she "retired" from the stage almost as many times. She spent many years in Rome. In 1871 she began her dramatic readings, which were highly successful. Her final farewells to the stage were undertaken in 1875, and the great ovation at Booth's Theatre, with the ode by Stoddard and the presentation of the laurel by William Cullen Bryant, was one of the most brilliant events in stage history. She died at the Parker House, in Boston, Feb. 18, 1876, aged sixty. With all her genius, she possessed enough Yankee thrift to accumulate her earnings, and died worth \$600,000. She was buried at Mt. Auburn.

Another notable engagement that season was that of Senora Isabel Cubas, the Spanish dancer, who attracted a crowded house.

Isabel Cubas was born in Cadiz in 1831. At thirteen years of age she was engaged as a solo dancer in Madrid, and, after dancing in some of the first theatres in Spain, she returned to Madrid, where she remained two years. After dancing at all the principal opera houses in the Old World, she visited America in May, 1861, and made her *début* in Canada. She danced in New York and Philadelphia, and then started on a starring tour, assisted by a full *ballet corps*, and played in all the principal theatres of the country. Died in New York, June 20, 1864, and was buried in Greenwood. She was married to a Mr. Blasco, and left one beautiful daughter behind, about six years of age.

The only other prominent organization that appeared that year was an Italian Opera Company, which presented the "Barber of Seville," with Sig. Brignoli and Isabella Hinckley in the leading *rôles*.

The elder Hermann was the first attraction at this house

in 1862. He gave exhibitions of legerdemain for three nights beginning January 13th. J. C. Myers had a benefit February 3d. H. C. Jarrett brought an excellent dramatic company March 4th and 5th. It included E. L. Davenport, J. W. Wallack, William Wheatley, Julia Bennett Barrow, Mrs. Wallack and John E. Owens. The plays were "Hamlet" and "The Stranger." Lucille Western played *Camille* on the evening of March 7th.

Lucille and Helen Western were born in New Orleans, La., in 1843 and 1844 respectively. Their father (in the tobacco business), removed to Binghamton, N. Y., where he died in 1859; their mother subsequently married William B. English, the once popular theatrical manager, which may account for their adopting the stage as a profession. Their careers were very closely identified until the death of Helen, in 1868, when the best days of Lucille may be said to have begun. For several seasons, about 1855, the two sisters appeared under their step-father's management in the larger New England towns in small parts, and were known as "The Star Sisters," their principal piece being "The Three Fast Men."

Lucille, in after years, became the well-known exponent of emotional dramas like "East Lynne" and "The Child Stealer." During the war she travelled with the Davenport-Wallack Combination, playing *Nancy Sykes*, in "Oliver Twist" to Davenport's *Bill* and J. W. Wallack's *Fagin*. She died in Philadelphia, Jan. 11, 1877, while playing a star engagement in the Walnut Street Theatre. She was the wife of James H. Meade. Her first great hit was in the dual rôle in "East Lynne," as dramatized by Clifton W. Tayleure, a part which she at first refused to even rehearse. It is estimated that it afterwards brought her over a quarter of a million of dollars, all of which was frittered away by others. Her life was one of incessant toil, without fruition. Had her great powers been properly directed, far different would have been her record.

May 21st and 22d, Davenport and Wallack returned and presented "The School for Scandal." The *Journal*, on the following day, said it was the finest cast ever seen here. July 10th, 11th and 12th the Boston Museum Company gave the operatta "The Doctor of Alcantara," with L. Mesteyer, George Ketchum, Henry Peakes, Emily Mesteyer, Josie Orton and



others in the cast. August 22d, E. L. Davenport, E. L. Tilton, A. W. Fenno, Charles Barron and others appeared in "Damon and Pythias." The Ravel *troupe* played two engagements within a few weeks. W. J. Florence and wife came October 13th, 14th and 15th, and the manager announced that new United States currency would be given in change. J. C. Myers took the management of the house October 20th and held it until the 24th of March, 1863. His stock company included Georgianna Anna Reynolds, Rebecca Adams, Lottie Howland, Fannie Marsh, Emma Leone, Mrs. D. Nourse, Louisa Morse, Mrs. J. H. Browne, Mrs. J. Dunn, E. W. Beattie, B. Fuller, D. Nourse, Harry Howland, J. H. Browne, J. Dunn, C. Fredericks, J. Keefe, W. D. Crolins, C. Rogers, W. H. Preston, and J. Holmes. During this management the stars were Alice Placide, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, Matilda Heron, J. H. Hackett, Maggie Mitchell, Laura Keene, and John E. Owens, and the Holman Opera Company also came.

The theatre was occupied most of the time in 1863. As stated above, Mr. Myers's management continued until March 24th. He also brought companies here after that date at frequent intervals. The Wallack-Davenport combination came for one week, beginning April 6th, and their almost perfect performances are still remembered with pleasure by a large number of our citizens. Among the other notable engagements were those of Peter and Caroline Richings, Kate Reignolds, supported by Stuart Robson and Owen Marlowe, Laura Keene, William Warren, Jane Coombs, J. Wilkes Booth, October 15th, 16th, 17th, and Mrs. Barrow.

Booth was at this time twenty-five years old, and as handsome a man as ever graced the stage. He retired from the profession soon after this and speculated in oil. Nov. 23, 1864, he, with his brothers, Edwin and Junius Brutus, played "Julius Cæsar," at the Winter Garden in New York, for the benefit of the Shakspeare monument fund. His last appearance as an actor on the mimic stage was at Ford's Theatre in Washington, where he played *Pescara* for John McCullough's benefit. April 14, 1865, in the same theatre, while the third act of "Our American Cousin" was being performed, he shot Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, through the head, inflicting a fatal wound. The

assassin jumped from the private box in which the presidential party were seated, to the stage, brandishing a dagger and shouting *sic semper tyrannis*, fled to the door, mounted a horse and rode away. On the 26th he was discovered armed to the teeth, in a barn, near Bowling Green, and bidding the world defiance. He was shot and killed by Boston Corbett. He was at first secretly buried at midnight, under the flag-stones of the arsenal warehouse in Washington; but, in February, 1869, by permission of the government, the remains were disinterred by the relatives, and now rest near those of his father, in the cemetery at Baltimore. This terrible deed is the more remarkable from the rarity of criminals among the dramatic profession.

The Davenport-Wallack company returned again November 13th, and Mrs. Barrow also played an engagement from December 14th to the 19th.

The following year, 1864, was one of the most flourishing the Academy had ever known. Mr. A. Jantz had engaged an Italian opera company to appear on the evening of the 1st of February at an expense of \$3,000, but the subscriptions not warranting the expense, the engagement was given up. Among the dramatic stars who appeared that year were Harry Watkins, J. B. Roberts, Yankee Locke, Ettie Henderson (wife of William Henderson, the first manager of the Providence Opera House), "Vestvali, the Magnificent," H. G. Clarke, John Murray, McKean Buchanan, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, William Warren, with Josie Orton and Charles Baum. The Davenport-Wallack company also came, with Rose Eytinge, and delighted large audiences with "Still Waters Run Deep."

One of the most notable events of the year was the appearance of the German opera company, under the management of Leonard Grover. In this company were Karl Formes, Marie Frederici, Johannsen, Herrmann and Habelman. The operas presented were "Faust," "Don Juan" and "Robert le Diable." The American Band appeared in the first opera, and created quite a sensation. The houses were crowded during this engagement, and the general opinion was that it was the best opera company that had ever visited Providence up to that time. It returned October 29th, and presented "The Jewess."

Another important engagement of this season was that of "Vestvali, the Magnificent," who came March 7th and 8th. I have asked at least a score of theatre-goers of from twenty-five to thirty years ago if they remembered her, and in every case the reply has been in the negative; and yet she created a profound sensation at the time, as the following notice from the *Providence Journal* of March 8, 1864, will testify:

"The Academy of Music seldom, if ever, contained such an audience as crowded its orchestra, parquet and gallery last night, and never before was anything presented on its boards so near the sublime as Mlle. Vestvali, in her character of *Gamee*, the Jewish mother. If the audience was undemonstrative and tame in their manifestations of approval of the impassioned periods, they must be excused, for they were spell-bound and feared lest they should lose the lightest tone or miss the simplest expression of that most queenly, superb, and powerful actress. Vestvali was truly "the magnificent." She dressed, looked, acted and almost lived her nice and accurate conception of the part. Every tone had its proper modulation, every gesture its fittest expression, every glance of her eye was a faithful mirror of thought, and every smile or frown told its tale of joy or bitterness."

Felicita Vestvali was born on the banks of the Vistula, in Cracow, on Feb. 23, 1839. Her father was the Governor of Cracow. At the age of twelve she spoke six languages, understood most of the ancient as well as modern poets of Europe, and played upon several instruments. Came to this country in May, 1855, and, after great success, returned to Europe in June, 1867.

Messrs. Tompkins and Thayer, of the Boston Theatre, leased the Academy in October, 1864, and managed it for the succeeding five years.

## CHAPTER XIV.

1865—1866.

OPENING OF THE CITY HALL—Mlle. PAREPA—WALLACK-DAVENPORT COMBINATION—FIRST VISIT OF AGNES PERRY—SKETCH OF THIS POPULAR ARTISTE—SKETCH OF FANNY DAVENPORT—CLARA LOUISE KELLOGG'S APPEARANCE—PAREPA, BRIGNOLL, AND FERRANTI—BOSTON THEATRE COMPANY IN "STREETS OF NEW YORK"—ALMOST A RIOT—SKETCH OF ADELAIDE RISTORI—SKETCH OF JOHN BROUGHAM—SKETCH OF LOTTA.

FOR a year or two the Academy of Music had had practically no opposition, especially in the way of dramatic entertainments, because there was no other hall in the city fitted up with scenery and the other appliances of a theatre. On the 4th of January, 1865, the City Hall, built upon the site of the present City Hall, was opened. It was built by Messrs. Charles N. Harrington and R. M. Larned. Mr. Harrington had had considerable experience as a stage carpenter in Mr. Forbes's theatre, and he made good use of his knowledge in his new venture. Mayor Doyle made a pleasant address at the opening, and the remainder of the programme consisted of a concert by the American Band, with the late Addie Ryan, of Boston, as soloist.

The entertainments given in this house during the first year of its existence consisted of a lecture by Artemus Ward, Chadwick & Webb's minstrels, concert by Richard Cooper, the boy soprano, American Band concert, Norwood, the Fakir, Chase & Newcomb's minstrels, Cotton & Murphy's minstrels, lecture by Anna Dickinson, Duprez & Greene's minstrels, Newcomb's minstrels, Allyne, the wizard, Chrysty's minstrels, lecture by Josh Billings, Tony Pastor's *troupe*, Bryant's minstrels, concert by Mlle. Parepa, Herrmann, Morris Bros., Pell & Trowbridge's minstrels, Hagar's Allegory of the Rebellion, and a concert by Blind Tom.

We give this list principally to show what a large number of minstrel companies came to the city that year. Many of the same companies also came to the Academy of Music that year, either before or after they had appeared in City Hall, and there were also others not mentioned in the above list, among them Cal. Wagner's.

The principal entertainments of a dramatic and musical character, given in the Academy of Music in 1865, were as follows; Jan. 16, one week, Mrs. D. P. Bowers; Feb. 20, 21, 22, Laura Keene, in "Our American Cousin;" April 25, 26, Wallack-Davenport combination in "Still Waters Run Deep;" May 6, Wm. Warren combination; July 11 to 21, McKean Buchanan, in "Richelieu," etc.; Aug. 9, 10, Emilie Melville in "Fanchon" and "Hidden Hand;" Aug. 21, engagement of Helen Western for one week, in "French Spy" and "St. Marc;" and of R. S. Meldrum for one week in "Streets of New York;" Sept. 14, 15, 16, Italian opera, with Sig. Susini, in "Ernani," "Norma" and "Faust." Sept. 21, Joseph Proctor, in "Nick of the Woods;" Sept. 28, 29, 30, "Arrah Na Pogue," with first visit to this city of Agnes Perry (now Agnes Booth Schoeffel;) Nov. 6, 7, 8, 9, Edwin Forrest in "Richelieu," "Hamlet" and "King Lear," supported by John McCullough, J. W. Collier and Agnes Perry; Nov. 30, H. C. Jarrett's combination, when Fanny Davenport made her first appearance in Providence; Dec. 23, Theatre Français from New York.

It will be noticed that this year was marked by the appearance here of two actresses who have since become very prominent, namely: Agnes Perry and Fanny Davenport. Agnes Perry, *née* Agnes Land Rookes, was born in Australia about 1843, and with her sister Belle, arrived at San Francisco in 1858, and shortly after her arrival she married Harry Perry, a very able actor, but "*too jovial*" fellow, with whom she remained in San Francisco till 1861, when he died. She shortly afterwards came East and immediately was recognized as a star of the first magnitude. About 1866, while playing in New York, she was married to Junius Brutus Booth, and after that acted in a desultory way in New York till Mr. Booth's death. He left her his entire fortune, near \$200,000. After a widowhood of one year she was married to Mr. John Schoeffel, manager of the Tremont Theatre in Boston, and

partner with Mr. Henry E. Abbey. Mrs. Schoeffel still retains her stage name of Agnes Booth, and could easily retire from the stage if she chose to do so, but she occupies to-day the proud position of being a great public favorite—a place hard to abandon.

Fanny Davenport was born in London, in 1850, and is the daughter of the late E. L. Davenport. Her first appearance was as a child in the Howard Athenæum, Boston. She first appeared in New York at Niblo's, in 1862, but never created much of a sensation till, under Daly's fostering care, she blossomed forth into an emotional actress. Her first important part was as the sentimental heroine in T. W. Robertson's "Play," which she performed during the illness of Agnes Ethel, and soon after succeeded to that lady's position in the company. A very beautiful woman, an actress inheriting from both father and mother much dramatic talent, she is one of the most popular stars of the day, playing a wide range of parts. She is, in fact, the most versatile of all the star actresses in the country. She is married to Mr. Melbourne McDowell.

Maggie Mitchell was the first dramatic star to come to the City Hall in 1866. Her nights were Feb. 5 and 6, and the house was crowded on both occasions. Feb. 19, E. W. Marston was seen there in "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." Oct. 2, Parepa, Brignoli, J. L. Hatton, Carl Rosa and S. B. Mills gave a concert which was fully attended by the fashionable people of the city. Nov. 9, 10, Clara Louise Kellogg, with Fanny Stockton, Sig. Bellini, etc., sang to crowded houses. Nov. 24, Hagar's Allegory was given, Nov. 30, Parepa, Brignoli and Ferranti appeared in concert, and Dec. 11, Howard Paul and wife were seen in "Dream of the Reveller." The remainder of the time at this hall that year was occupied by lecturers in the Franklin Lyceum and Mechanics' courses, and by minstrel entertainments, the latter being nearly as numerous as in the preceding year.

At the Academy of Music 1866 was one of the most prosperous years it had ever known. It was an important year, not only on account of the very large number of excellent stars and dramatic companies appearing there, but also on account of a disturbance, amounting almost to a riot, growing

out of a performance given there April 13th, which will be referred to a little later in this chapter.

January 1st, the Winslow & Co. combination began a week's engagement with Sam Hemple as the star; January 16th, the Boston Theatre Company began an engagement of two weeks, playing the "Streets of New York," with Frank Mayo as *Badger*, and Charles T. Parsloe as the *Bootblack*; February 16th, the Boston Theatre Company came again for two nights, with Frank Mayo, Louis Aldrich and others in the "Robbers of the Forest of Bohemia." February 20th, 21st, came an English Opera Company with the "Bohemian Girl," Harry Peakes as *Devilshoof*, and Mrs. William Gomersal as *Arlene*. March 5th, Lotta appeared here for the first time, with Frank Hardenberg and W. J. LeMoynes in support. March 12th, 13th, T. M. Tyrrell had a benefit. March 14th, 15th, 16th, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams appeared. The Hanlon Brothers came the 19th and 20th. Barber's Dramatic Company played the "Hidden Hand" the 29th. April 2d, Robert Heller gave his delightful performances in magic, adding to them his skillful piano playing, which was the talk of the town. April 9th, 10th, 11th, Laura Keane came. April 13th, J. H. Hackett came, with William F. Burroughs in the cast. This was the performance referred to above. The Providence *Journal*, the next morning, had the following account of it:

"Once more a large and respectable audience has been treated in a very shabby and dishonest manner by the 'Star Company from Winter Garden,' New York, under the management, as the bills announced, of William Stuart, of Winter Garden, New York, and C. W. Tayleure, of the Broadway Theatre, N. Y. Instead of presenting Shakspeare's immortal comedy, in five acts, called the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' as was promised, the play was so cut and mutilated that Shakspeare would have disowned and repudiated it, as the audience did last night. As was the case some time since, when the same company pretended to bring out 'Arrah na Pogue,' the management was resolved to have the actors' wardrobes, properties and appurtenances on board the ten o'clock train to New York. In consequence of that determination, the performance commenced before scarcely any of the people who had secured seats had arrived, and the play

was slashed and mutilated until it was finally brought to an ignominious end soon after nine o'clock, the last act, or so much of it as was recited by the actors, being entirely inaudible, because of the storm of disapprobation that was kept up in all parts of the house. When the curtain dropped, a rush was made for the depot, and the 'Star Company from the Winter Garden' took their departure from Providence, amid the hootings and groanings of 500 exasperated and disgusted people. There was no actual violence that we hear of, but a serious breach of the peace was at one time imminent."

April 16th, Helen Western came in the "Corsican Brothers," and "Satan in Paris;" April 20th, Mr. and Mrs. Gomersal; 26th, E. L. Davenport as *Sir Giles Overreach*, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," the play in which he first made his appearance upon the stage as *Willdo*. May 7th, E. T. Stetson appeared in the "Marble Heart;" 14th, John E. Owens as *Solon Shingle*; 16th, Lucille Western in "East Lynne;" 25th, E. L. Davenport and Lucille Western, for the benefit of George K. Goodwin; 25th, first appearance of W. C. Forbes, after an absence of eight years," as *Master Walter* in "The Hunchback." A cordial greeting was given to him by his old friends and admirers, who filled the house. June 4th, 5th, Rose Eytinge came in "Miriam's Crime," and had among her support W. F. Burroughs, James Duff, and W. A. Donaldson; June 11th, Maggie Mitchell; 18th, 19th, 20th, Anderson, the Wizard; 21st, 22d, 23d, the Naddi Opera Company; July 4th, W. C. Forbes Dramatic Company; 10th, Benefit of Portland Sufferers, W. C. Forbes, Frank Drew, Madame Andrieu, and Mrs. M. W. Fish being among the volunteers; 23d, Maffit & Bartholomew. August 7th, 8th, E. L. Davenport, with his daughter, Fanny; 17th, 18th, the Buisley Family; 29th, Helen Western; 31st, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence. September 8th, Helen Western; 13th, 14th, 15th, Laura Keane in "Our American Cousin;" 17th, the Webb Sisters; 24th, 25th, 26th, the "Naiad Queen," advertised as entirely new, with Laura Cavendish in the principal rôle. October 9th, Lotta; 17th, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams; 22d, E. L. Davenport; 29th, J. S. Clarke, with Boston Theatre Company; 30th, 31st, "Doctor of Alcantara," by company from French Theatre, New York, with Rosa Cooke in the cast. November 6th, F. S. Chanfrau and Olive Logan;



7th, Ristori as Mary Stuart ; 9th, 10th, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Paul ; 12th, Boston Theatre Company in "Three Guardsmen," with C. R. Thorne, Jr., F. Hardenberg, Agnes Perry, Rachel Noah, Susie Cluer, and H. L. Bascomb in the cast. November 19th, 20th, John Brougham in "Playing with Fire," and "Dombey and Son ;" 27th, Helen Western. December 6th, 7th, Joseph Proctor ; 17th, Mrs. F. W. Lander (formerly Jean M. Davenport) in "Adrienne, the Actress ;" 24th, Leo Hudson, equestrienne ; and 25th, John Brougham.

Even up to the present time, with the very large increase in population, there has rarely been a year when so many stars of distinction and combinations of rare merit have visited this city. Ristori was greeted with a crowded house, composed of the most fashionable people in the city, and the receipts were the largest ever known on a single evening, up to that time, and have been equalled not more than once or twice since. It was said that they reached upwards of four thousand dollars.

Adelaide Ristori was born in 1821 ; is a native of Friuli, and the child of strolling actors ; appeared on the stage when but two months old. Her first instructress was her grandmother, Teresa Ristori ; but having made her *début* as *Francesca di Rimini*, 1835, she joined a year later the Royal Sardinian Company, where Carlotta Marchioni, perceiving the genius of the young actress, trained her as her own successor in the leading parts. A romantic love affair, followed by her marriage in 1847 with the young Marquis Capranica del Grillo, caused Ristori to relinquish her profession for a short period, but fortunately the objections of her husband's family were overcome by an exhibition of her genius at a charitable performance, and she returned to the stage. Caroline Internari gave her lessons in tragedy, and, having established her reputation in Italy as *Myrrha*, *Rosamonde*, *Octavia*, *Antigone*, *Mary Stuart*, and other characters, she went in 1855 to Paris, where she made her *début* as *Francesca*, while Rachel was at the zenith of her fame. In spite of the severe nature of the test, Ristori's genius triumphed, and her acting was praised by Lamartine, Dumas and other celebrated critics. Nor was she less successful in England (1858). Fresh laurels were gained in every European capital from Moscow to Dublin, and her travels were extended to Egypt and Constantinople.

Nor was she less successful in the New World, where she visited not only the United States, but also the principal countries of South America. In 1873 Ristori revisited England, and gave her farewell performance at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester. Her grand impersonation of *Lady Macbeth*, despite the inadequate support accorded to it, was received with enthusiasm by London audiences during a short season in 1884.

Ristori's first appearance in America was at the French Theatre, New York, as *Medea*. She visited thirty cities on this visit, playing *Mary Stuart*, *Myrrha*, and *Lady Macbeth*. Since that time she has twice visited America, last time in 1886, without any diminution of her powers of pleasing the cultured public.

John Brougham was born in Ireland in 1810, and died in New York in 1880. He was one of the most prolific of playwrights, and a most excellent Irish comedian. One writer says of him: "John Brougham's inexhaustible flow of spirits in his best days pervaded all his acting, and invested the most unattractive part with an alluring charm, as many a prosaic spot in nature becomes enchanted land by the music of falling waters. Add to this exuberant vitality a rich endowment of mother wit, a bright intelligence, keen sympathy and appreciation, and rare personal magnetism, and you have before you glorious John, whose hearty voice it was always a pleasure to hear, and whose face beaming with humor was always welcomed with delight." Among the plays from his pen were "Vanity Fair," *Dombey & Son*," "David Copperfield," "Actress of Padua," (written especially for Charlotte Cushman), "Bleak House," "Playing With Fire," "Pocahontas," "Game of Life," and "John Garth." Like many others, he was improvident, and when old age came, he was poor. Two years before his death his friends in New York gave him a benefit, which netted him \$10,000.

That was the first season of Lotta in this city. Lotta Mignon Crabtree—for so she was christened—was born at No. 750 Broadway, New York City, Nov. 7, 1847. She lived in the house where she was born till 1854, when she was taken to California, and made her first appearance on any stage at a concert given in Laport, "for one night only." Her second appearance was at Petaluma (1858), where she played *Gertrude* in

"The Loan of a Lover." She then travelled as the star of a company for nearly two years, being called "La Petite Lotta," and ranked as an infant prodigy. She then went into the variety and minstrel business, becoming, in 1860, the pet of San Francisco, many nights being literally showered with gold and silver coins by the delighted public. Each year she took a tour through the state, and also played engagements at Maguire's Opera House. After one of the most successful benefits ever given on the Pacific slope, she sailed for the East, and arrived May 16, 1864, and gave her first performance in New York, at Niblo's Saloon June 1st. She was not a success. In August she was at McVicker's Theatre, in Chicago, where, one night, while playing in "The Seven Sisters," an unknown admirer threw her, neatly done up in a handkerchief, a \$300 gold watch and chain. From Chicago she returned to Boston, and then made a tour of the United States. In the summer of 1867 she made her second appearance in New York, this time at Wallack's, under the management of C. W. Tayleure, and played the most brilliant summer engagement ever known there.

In 1869 she returned to California, and was welcomed back in one of the most brilliant engagements ever played there. She has played many very successful engagements in Providence. Her last visit here was during the early part of last season.

## CHAPTER XV.

1867-1869.

ADELAIDE PHILLIPS, BRIGNOLI AND SUSINI—THE THREE WORRELL SISTERS—LAURA KEENE IN "OUR AMERICAN COUSIN"—MME. ANNA DE LA GRANGE—CLARA LOUISE KELLOGG IN OPERA—THE "LONG STRIKE"—DEBUT OF HANNAH E. BAILEY—SKETCH OF EDWIN BOOTH—SKETCH OF MRS. SCOTT-SIDDONS—VISIT OF CHARLES DICKENS—AGATHA STATES.

I N 1867, the City Hall had but few attractions other than lectures and minstrel performances, but some of these were excellent. February 28th to March 1st, "Don Pasquale" and the "Barber of Seville" were given very satisfactorily in Italian by Adelaide Phillips, Brignoli, Susini, and others. April 12th, "Cinderella" and "Aladdin" were produced in gorgeous style by a large company under the management of B. F. Whitman. The three Worrell Sisters, Jennie, Sophie, and Irene, were at the head of the company. Sophie has since become the wife of George S. Knight. April 25th, 26th, Laura Keene appeared in "Our American Cousin," the same play in which she appeared at Ford's Opera House in Washington on the 14th of April, 1865, when President Lincoln was shot by J. Wilkes Booth. June 17th the "Black Crook" began a week's engagement, and attracted overflowing houses. The Ronconi Italian Opera Company produced "Barber of Seville" August 23d. September 2d, Marietta Ravel appeared in the "French Spy." November 12th, Parepa Rosa and Ferranti gave a concert. November 28th, Madame Anna de la Grange, one of the best of operatic artists, appeared in "Norma."

The Academy of Music had many good attractions in 1867, among them being the Boston Theatre Company in the "Octoroon" and "Griffith Gaunt," with C. R. Thorne, H. L. Bascomb and Louis Aldrich in the casts, Clara Louise Kel-

logg in "Fra Diavolo" and "Lucia di Lammermoor;" the New York Olympic Company, in the "Long Strike," with J. H. Stoddard and young Vandenhoff; "Uncle Tom's Cabin," with Louis Aldrich as *Uncle Tom* and Rachel Noah as *Topsey*; the Boston Theatre Company in "Rosedale"; Howard Paul and wife; Edwin Booth as *Hamlet*; Ristori's farewell. In this engagement she impersonated *Elizabeth*, but there was a great falling off in receipts compared with her former visit; Frank Mayo as *Richard III.*, and as *Badger* in "Streets of New York;" Davenport and Wallack Combination, with Emily Jordan and Thomas Placide, the plays being "Othello," "Still Waters Run Deep," "Black Eyed Susan" and "Dæmon and Pythias;" Wyzeman Marshall in the "Honeymoon," on which occasion Miss Hannah E. Bailey, of this city, made her *début*; Kate Reignolds; C. R. Thorne, Louis Aldrich, James Lewis, N. D. Jones, Louisa Morse, etc., in "Corsican Brothers" and "Carpenter of Rouen;" E. L. Davenport, Frank Mayo and Lucille Western in "Oliver Twist;" Helen Western in "East Lynne;" Joseph Proctor and Kitty Blanchard in "Hidden Hand;" Mrs. Lander in "Queen Elizabeth" and "Mary Stuart;" Mr. and Mrs. Florence in "Handy Andy;" Boston Theatre Company in "Griffith Gaunt" and "Nobody's Daughter;" the Hanlons; complimentary benefit to W. C. Forbes, November 22d; La Grange and Brignoli in opera; and "Norwood," a play written by Henry Ward Beecher.

It will be seen that the most notable engagement of the season was that of Mr. Edwin Booth. Mr. Booth was born at his father's country-seat, Belair, Maryland, in November, 1833. When a mere boy, he accompanied his father in his travels as his dresser, studying with and caring for him. His first regular appearance on the stage was made at the Boston Museum, in a minor part in "Richard III.," Sept. 10, 1849. On the 27th of September, 1850, he appeared in the "Iron Chest," as *Wilford*, for his father's benefit, at the National Theatre in New York. After the death of his father, young Booth went to California and engaged for utility business. In 1854 he went to Australia and the Sandwich Islands. Returning to New York, he burst upon the town at Burton's Theatre, May, 4, 1857, as *Richard III.*, and has ever since been recognized as one of the foremost of American tragedians. In

July, 1861, he married Mary Devlin, and sailed for England. Three years after she died. On the 28th of November, 1864, Mr. Booth began an engagement at the Winter Garden, in New York, as *Hamlet*, which he played one hundred nights. His second wife, whom he married June 7, 1869, was Mary McKicker, daughter of Manager McKicker, of Chicago. Mr. Booth has been a deep and careful student. All the minutiae of the stage he has mastered. His readings are all that can be desired; his gestures and poses are grace itself. In private life he is a singularly reserved and silent man. It is not strange. Over his life, from boyhood up, have hung clouds of the darkest gloom, out of which darted one thunderbolt, that almost paralyzed a nation. Through all his trials, and amid assaults as dastardly as they were uncalled for, Edwin Booth still enjoys the respect and honor of his countrymen.

The next season, 1868, brought another list of the strongest attractions in the country to this city. At the Academy of Music the Boston Theatre Company presented "*Rosedale*" and the "*Streets of New York*;" January 8th, 9th and 10th, Wyzeman Marshall and Lucette Webster appeared in the "*Rag Picker of Paris*;" January 13th to January 20th, M. W. Leffingwell; January 28th, Nellie Germon; February 3d, McKean Buchanan; February 17th, 18th, Ada Gray; March 2d, Yankee Locke and Dollie Bidwell; March 11th, John E. Owens; March 30th, Joseph Proctor; April 27th, Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Davenport; April 29th, four nights, Jarrett & Palmer's company in "*White Fawn*;" May 11th, 12th, 13th, Edwin Booth in "*Hamlet*," "*Richelieu*" and "*Katharine and Petruchio*;" May 19th, Adelaide Ristori, another farewell; June 1st, Edwin Booth again; June 2d, Parisian company, with Mlle. Lambele in "*Grand Duchesse*," one of the best entertainments ever given here; June 16th, Kate Fisher as *Mazeppa*; July 17th, William Warren as *Paul Pry*; September 14th, Frank Mayo in "*Hamlet*," "*Corsican Brothers*" and "*Streets of New York*;" September 18th, 19th, "*Grand Duchesse*" in English, with Eva Brent; September 23d, "*Foul Play*," with C. R. Thorne and Rachel Noah; September 25th, "*Under the Gaslight*," with Thorne as *Snorkey*; September 28th, Laura Keane in "*Our American Cousin*;" October 1st, 2d, 3d, Miss Major Pauline Cushman in "*The*

Gypsy Queen;" October 5th, Maggie Mitchell; October 9th, 10th, Mlle. Zoe; October 23d, 24th, Mrs. F. W. Lander; November 6th, 7th, F. S. Chanfrau; November 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, Edwin Adams in "The Heretic;" November 23d, 24th, Mrs. Scott Siddons in "Romeo and Juliet," "As You Like It," with C. R. Thorne, W. F. Burroughs and Rachel Noah in the cast; December 3d, 4th, 5th, E. L. Davenport; December 7th, John Brougham in the "Lottery of Life;" December 14th, Charles Baum in "The Fool's Revenge;" December 18th, 19th, E. L. Davenport, advertised as "the greatest actor of the age;" December 22d, J. M. Ward; December 31st, McKean Buchanan.

This was Mrs. Scott Siddons's first appearance here on the histrionic stage. She came to America only a few months previous, and honored Providence with her first reading in America. She is the great granddaughter of the Mrs. Siddons, and, according to Fanny Kemble, "her exquisite features present the most perfect living miniature of her great grandmother's majestic beauty." She was born in India in 1844, and was educated in Germany. Her first professional appearance was at Nottingham, England, as *Lady Macbeth*. Her first American appearance as an actress was at the Boston Museum.

At the City Hall, the important engagements in 1868, were Charles Dickens, February 20th, 21st, who read from his own works, "The Trial of Pickwick," "Christmas Carol," "Dr. Marigold" and "Bob Sawyer's Party." The house was crowded at both entertainments, and the audiences were delighted. March 27th, La Grange and Brignoli; April 30th, Ole Bull; May 1st, Parepa Rosa; June 6th, "Grand Duchesse," with Tostee; August 24th, 25th, Grand German Opera Company; August 27th, Blind Tom; October 12th, Frank Mayo and E. L. Davenport; November 9th, Clara Louise Kellogg, in concert.

In 1869 the Academy probably had a larger number of attractions than in any other year before or since, during its existence. Some of the most prominent were: January 8th, 9th, Florence burlesque *troupe* in "Grand Duchesse;" January 11th, week, Boston Theatre Company in "After Dark," with Thorne, Aldrich, Weaver, J. M. Ward, Shirley France, T. H. Burns, Rachel Noah, and Helen Tracy; Janu

ary 18th, 19th, the same in "Foul Play;" January 25th, 26th, Edwin Forrest in "Jack Cade" and "Metamora;" January 28th, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams; February 1st, 2d, 3d, Florence Burlesque Company, with Jennie Kimball; February 4th, 5th, 6th, Frank Roche in "Iron Mask," "Rosedale," "Corsican Brothers," and "Dick Turpin;" February 8th, Elise Holt Burlesque Company in "Lucretia Borgia;" February 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, Boston Theatre Company in "Lancashire Lass" and "Victorine, or, I'll Sleep On It;" 17th, 18th, the same in "Three Guardsmen," "Under the Gaslight;" March 11th, 12th, 13th, Agnes Ethel; 22d, 23d, 24th, Riching's English Opera Company in "Crown Diamonds," "Martha," etc., with Castle, Campbell, Seguin and others; April 5th, benefit of J. D. Grace; 8th, 9th, 10th, Mr. and Mrs. Florence; 14th, Lotta in "Fire Fly;" 15th, Boston Theatre Company in "School;" 20th, 21st, 22d, Laura Keene; 24th, benefit Louisa Morse; June 14th, 15th, Wallack's Theatre Company, with Rose Eytinge, Blanche Gray, G. H. Gilbert, Mrs. Sedley Brown, Fanny Reeves, J. F. Hall, J. H. Stoddard, Owen Marlowe, J. C. Williamson, C. H. Rockwell, etc.; 16th, 17th, 18th, another company from Wallack's in "Rosedale" and "The Rivals," Charles Fisher, B. T. Ringgold, J. B. Polk, Emily Mestayer and others in the casts; June 21st, Ada Harland in burlesque, "Forty Thieves;" July 16th, 17th, Kate Reignolds, in "Angel of Midnight;" August 18th, 19th, Whitman's Burlesque Company, in "Field of the Cloth of Gold," with Jennie Kimball, Mrs. Fred Williams, Hattie Snow, Minnie Foster, Eliza Jordan, "Corinne, the Child Wonder," Harry Murdock, C. A. Stedman, etc.; October 11th, 12th, 13th, Maggie Mitchell; 19th, 20th, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams; November 10th, 11th, 12th, George L. Fox; 15th, 16th, Mrs. Howard; 18th, D. J. McGuinness, in "Irish Tutor;" 24th, Edwin Booth, in "Hamlet;" 29th, 30th, Lingard and Alice Dunning; December 3d, Jennie Kimball and Corinne; 22d, Kate Reignolds, in "East Lynne;" 25th, Boston Theatre Company, in "Arrah na Pogue," with Mrs. J. B. Booth, Helen Tracy, Frank Roche, Leslie Allen, D. J. McGuinness, H. A. Weaver, H. S. Murdoch in the cast.

At City Hall, the first event of interest in 1869 was February 1st, appearance of Agatha States as *Elvira* in



"Ernani." She was a handsome woman and a thorough artist. April 19th, Clara Louise Kellogg was announced for a farewell concert; May 8th, Parepa Rosa; May 21st, Clara Louise Kellogg in "Don Pasquale;" May 31st, Ole Bull's farewell; September 30th, the name was changed to Harrington's Opera House, and Flora Myers appeared there in the "Sea of Ice;" October 19th, Carlotta Patti in concert; October 29th, Sheridan Histronic Club, in "Gunmaker of Moscow," with Dennis O'Reilly as the *Gunmaker*; November 2d, Theodore Thomas; November 10th, benefit T. M. Tyrrell; November 19th, Kate Fisher; November 27th, 29th, 30th, Yankee Locke; December 8th, Mrs. Scott Siddons; December 20th, 21st, Selwyn's Theatre Company in "Follies of a Night;" December 27th, Dollie Bidwell.

## CHAPTER XVI.

1870-71.

HARRINGTON'S OPERA HOUSE TAKES THE LEAD—CLARA LOUISE KELLOGG'S THIRD "FAREWELL"—THE RUSSIAN CONCERT TROUPE—BENEFIT OF ANITA L. HARRIS—TOMPKINS AND THAYER'S LEASE OF THE ACADEMY EXPIRES—A LONG LIST OF GOOD ATTRACTIONS—LAWRENCE BARRETT IN THE "MAN O' AIRLIE"—SKETCH OF MR. BARRETT.

IN 1870, Harrington's Opera House took the lead in the number and excellence of its attractions, although the Academy had a few of the best. At the former house Clara Louise Kellogg appeared in concert January 5th, this being her third "farewell;" January 20th, 21st, Russian Concert *troupe*, with the great tenor, Agrenoff Slaviansky. (This company created a great sensation here by its excellent singing and the novelty of the music produced.) January 26th, 27th, 28th, F. S. Chanfrau, Ettie Henderson, C. R. Thorne, C. T. Parsloe, etc., in "Sam" and "Joe," an extra attraction being the recital of "Sheridan's Ride," by Mr. Thorne; February 1st, Parepa Rosa in "Maritana" and "Fra Diavolo." On this occasion Rose Hersee made her *début* here. She soon became a great favorite in this country. February 24th, 25th, 26th, E. L. Davenport came in "Enoch Arden," etc. March 9th, Selwyn's comedians came. Among the familiar names in this company were Stuart Robson, H. F. Daly, Harry Pearson, H. L. Bascomb, H. Melmer, T. H. Burns, C. Stedman, O. A. Dinsmore, T. Goldthwait, Kittie Blanchard, Mrs. E. L. Davenport, Mary Cary, Ida Savory, Miss Athena, Jennie Pearson. March 17th, 18th, 19th, John Brougham came in the "Lottery of Life;" March 24th, 25th, 26th, Lester Wallack in "Ours;" April 18th, 19th, Mrs. Scott Siddons as *Rosalind* and *Lady Teazle*; April 26th, 27th, 28th, Maggie Mitchell; May 7th, farewell of Howard Paul and wife; May 14th, Mrs. Scott Siddons in "King

Rene's Daughter" and "Frou Frou"; May 16th, Emma Waller; June 8th, 9th, Sophie Worrell Company; June 10th, 11th, "The Lancers," with Charles Wyndham, J. C. Williamson, C. H. Rockwell, Louise Moore and Amelia Harris in the cast; August 1st, complimentary benefit to Miss Anita L. Harris, of this city. Fanny Burt, Frank Evans, Dennis O'Reilly and others appeared. August 15th, 16th, Maffitt and Bartholomew; August 24th, Lingard and Alice Dunning; September 12th, Lucille Western; September 26th, 27th, Albert Aiken; October 2d, week, Lydia Thompson *troupe*; October 10th, 11th, J. K. Emmet; October 12th, 13th, Theodore Thomas; October 21st, 22d, Mrs. Scott Siddons in "Twixt Axe and Crown;" October 24th, 25th, 26th, Maggie Mitchell; October 28th, Adelaide Phillips and Jules Levy; October 29th, 31st, Rose and Harry Watkins; November 3d, Harry Taylor in "Ticket of Leave Man," with Lillie Wilkinson as *Sam Willoughby*; November 5th, 6th, Mrs. J. A. Oates in "The Fair One with the Blonde Wig;" November 11th, Christine Nilsson, with Annie Louise Cary and Brignoli; November 22d, 23d, 24th, Fannie Herring, Yankee Locke, T. H. Burns and others, in "Sam Patch in France," etc.; November 28th, 29th, Mrs. D. P. Bowers; December 5th, Mrs. G. C. Howard; December 10th, English Opera Company, with Castle, Bowler, Lawrence, Campbell, Drayton, Seguin, Rose Hersee, Zelda Seguin, etc.; the operas were "Martha" and "Dinorah;" December 26th, 27th, Stuart Robson; December 29th, 30th, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams.

The principal attractions at the Academy of Music in 1870 were Lucille Western, January 11th, 12th, 13th; Italian Opera Company, with Sig. Torriani, Miss Kellogg and Sig. Lefranc, in "Lucia" and "Trovatore;" March 28th, 29th, Lisa Weber's Burlesque Company, April 11th, 12th, 13th; E. L. Davenport and Wyzeman Marshall, April 20th; Mrs. Howard, April 30th; Parepa Rosa in "Rose of Castile" and "Marriage of Figaro," with Rose Hersee, Mr. and Mrs. Seguin, Castle and Campbell in the cast. This was one of the most successful as well as most agreeable operatic performances ever given in Providence, and merited, as it received, the patronage of the best people in the city; September 26th, 27th, Lisa Weber in burlesque, advertised as the only successful rival of Lydia Thompson.

The lease of the Academy of Music by Tompkins & Thayer, of the Boston Theatre, had now expired, and for a few years there were no dramatic entertainments given there. This left Harrington's Opera House as the only place in the city for such entertainments, and, for the year 1871, except during the hottest months, it was almost constantly filled.

The principal attractions were as follows: January 6th, Lillie Wilkinson; 20th, John Murray; 23d, Wyzeman Marshall; February 2d, Maretzek's new German Opera Company in "*Stradella*," with Karl Formes, Theodore Hablemann, etc.; February 6th, John E. Owens; 8th, Kellogg, in concert; 14th, H. G. Clarke's Dramatic Company in "*Streets of New York*;" 23d, 24th, 25th, Adelphi Burlesque Company; March 4th, Lina Edwin; 6th, 7th, John E. Owens; 10th, 11th, 12th, John L. Hall; 14th, 15th, Ravel-Martinetti *troupe*; 31st, benefit C. T. Parsloe; April 3d, 4th, 5th, Fox and Denier *troupe*; 11th, 12th, 13th, Maggie Mitchell; 17th, M. W. Leffingwell; 21st, 22d, Lingard and Alice Dunning; 24th, Mrs. G. C. Howard; May 5th, 6th, Oliver D. Byron; 8th, 9th, 10th, Lucille Western; 12th, Stuart Robson; 22d, J. L. Hall; 29th, 30th, Joseph Jefferson; June 5th, 6th, J. W. Wallack; 8th, 9th, 10th, John Brougham; 14th, 15th, 16th, Butler & Gilmore's Combination; 23d, 24th, Tony Pastor; 30th, Sheridan & Mack; July 4th, H. C. Clarke's Company; August 3d, benefit John Murray; 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, Lauri *troupe*; 26th, 28th, J. G. Campbell; September 4th, 5th, O. D. Byron; 8th, 9th, Edwin Adams; 11th, 12th, Lawrence Barrett in "*Man o' Airlie*;" 16th, 18th, Albert W. Aiken; 23d, 24th, E. T. Stetson; October 2d, John L. Hall; 9th, J. K. Enmet; 11th, 12th, J. M. Ward; 13th, 14th, Kate Reynolds; 19th, Lydia Thompson; 23d, 24th, Rose and Harry Watkins; 30th, 31st, Gus Phillips in "*Oofy Gooft*;" November 9th, benefit of J. D. Grace; 13th, 14th, Mrs. Macready in the character of *Shylock*; 15th, D. E. Bandmann; 21st, 22d, Joseph Murphy; 23d, 24th, 25th, Villa & Miner's Comic Opera Company; 30th, Lotta; December 23d, 25th, Frank Mayo.

One of the most pleasing events of the season at this house was the appearance of Mr. Lawrence Barrett in "*The Man o' Airlie*." It made a deep impression upon the better class of theatre-goers, and was talked about for a long time. The

Providence *Journal* said of it : " Mr. Lawrence Barrett has made the character of *James Harebell* his own, and from first to last does it just justice. Easy, smooth, natural, he not only enters into the spirit of the character, but he carries the audience with him, and he makes them a part of the play."

This play was always a favorite with Providence audiences, but Mr. Barrett found it unprofitable in many other cities, and especially in the smaller places, so that he played it but seldom after the first year or two. It was what is known in the profession as " over the heads " of the average audience.

Mr. Lawrence Barrett was born at Paterson, N. J., April 14, 1838. He was so sickly and feeble in his young days that his mother often had to carry him to school in her arms. His health improved after his family moved to Detroit, while he was quite young. But the family was poor, and he had to seek employment while still a boy. He became call-boy in the Metropolitan Theatre, at a salary of \$2.50 per week. It may be imagined that a bright boy was not slow at the theatre to gain a love for plays and acting, and that an ambitious boy was not slow to resolve to be an actor, and a great one. He watched all that he saw around him with studious attention, and treasured all that he could learn, adding to it in all his leisure moments by diligent study. As he gained in learning, he began to study speeches from Shakspeare, and to recite them to amuse his companions, and he watched the method of such good actors as he had the fortune to hear. At length he attracted the attention of the manager, and on a happy day in 1853 the part of *Muirad* in " The French Spy " was given to him. He did it so well that other small parts were given to him from time to time. Soon afterwards he went to Pittsburg, and for two years played in the support of many of the leading stars. In 1857, he was playing leading parts at the Old Chambers Street Theatre in New York, and attracted so much favorable attention from managers that he was placed in the position of being able to make choice among the theatres of New York for his next season's engagement. He went to Burton's and there met Edwin Booth, who came as a star. A friendship was thus early formed between them, which continued up to the death of Mr. Barrett. In 1858 he went to the Boston Museum as

leading man. He remained there two years and then went to the Howard Athenæum. When the war broke out he enlisted and served as captain of Company B, of the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers, from Oct. 8, 1861, to August, 1863. Upon his return to the North he played in Philadelphia, Washington, and New York, and finally went to New Orleans to manage a theatre there. His starrng began in 1864. He made trips to Europe in 1866, '67 and '68, and in '69 opened the California Theatre with John McCullough as his partner. The following year he sold out to his partner and resumed starrng. He soon after opened at Niblo's Garden in New York, and during his engagement there "Julius Cæsar" was produced. His impersonation of Cassius was considered superior to that of any other man who had ever played the part there. Soon after he went to Booth's Theatre, and for sixteen weeks played opposite characters to Mr. Booth. June 5, 1871, the first production in this country of the "Man o' Airlie" was given. In 1872 he was in the great cast of "Julius Cæsar" at Booth's, and again in 1875. In 1884 he played an engagement at Irving's theatre in London, and was given a banquet by the leading literary men of the great metropolis at the Langham Hotel. Mr. Barrett's subsequent career is pretty well known to all theatre-goers. He produced more good plays than almost any other man in the country. He was a brilliant writer, an excellent speaker, and no man in his profession has ever held a higher position among men of distinction in this country. After his final union of interests with Mr. Booth, the season began at Buffalo, Sept. 12, 1887, the supporting company being one of judiciously selected people, acting together under the stage direction of Mr. Barrett. Such audiences were never known in the theatres of the United States, as patronized Booth and Barrett throughout the season, the unprecedented success of which is defined by the fact that the profit to the tragedians was undoubtedly greater than had ever before been realized by any two actors in this country.

Messrs. Booth and Barrett were playing at the Broadway Theatre in New York at the time of his death. He had caught a severe cold while at rehearsal, but thought lightly of it. March 16, 1891, he was cast for *Adrian De Mauprat* in

"Richelieu," but was too ill to appear. The following night he played the part without apparent difficulty, but that was his last night on the stage, for in spite of the skill of distinguished physicians, he passed away on Friday morning, March 20th. He left a widow and three daughters, the latter being all married.

## CHAPTER XVII.

1871.

OPENING OF THE PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—A BUILDING THAT COST MORE THAN ALL THE OTHER THEATRES PROVIDENCE HAD EVER HAD—THE ORIGINAL STOCKHOLDERS—SKETCH OF THE OPENING EXERCISES—EX-GOV. VAN ZANDT'S POEM—CAST OF THE FIRST PLAY—SOME OF THE POPULAR PLAYS GIVEN—PAREPA ROSA AND CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN THE ONLY STARS OF THE FIRST SEASON.

THE great event of 1871, and one of the greatest events in the dramatic history of the city, was the opening of the Providence Opera House. For many years a movement had been on foot to erect an opera house here, and a few wealthy gentlemen had gone so far as to purchase land for such a building. At this point, however, there seemed to be a sudden collapse, and it was freely predicted that it would be years before any building such as contemplated would be erected. In July, 1871, the writer was visiting at the residence of Maggie Mitchell, then on Cedar Avenue, Long Branch. Mr. William Henderson was a near neighbor, and, in conversation with him one day about the lack of a good theatre in Providence, he said that he had so much confidence in its being a profitable investment, that he would willingly take \$10,000 worth of the stock. The writer told Mr. Henderson that if he would accompany him to Providence, he would introduce him to the gentlemen most interested in the matter, and he had no doubt that they would act favorably upon it at once, if a man with his experience was willing to prove his faith in the enterprise by subscribing the amount named. Mr. Henderson came to Providence the following week, and the writer took him to Col. Henry Lippitt's office, then in the Reynolds Building, on Weybosset street, and introduced him to Mr. Lippitt. They had not been in conversation half an hour before Mr. Lippitt said the matter



was as good as settled; that there would be a new opera house here, and that it would be a good one. With his well-known energy, he left his office, and, before night had come, as it has often been stated, all the necessary money had been pledged. Just as soon as the preliminary details could be arranged, the work began on the foundation at the corner of Dorrance, Pine and Eddy streets, and in ninety working days the structure had been completed, and the new Providence Opera House was opened on the evening of Dec. 4, 1871. The carpenters were at work even after the doors opened, and the last nail was not driven until within ten minutes of the time for the curtain to go up. Eight days before the opening the scene painter, Mr. Richard Marston, had not touched the drop curtain, and that seemed to annoy Mr. Henderson more than anything else. He finally made a wager of a basket of wine with Mr. Marston that the curtain would not be completed in time. The wager was readily accepted, and it was won by the painter, but he had very little time to spare.

Other difficulties which Mr. Henderson encountered in opening were in regard to his leading man, and the leader of the orchestra. Mr. Charles R. Thorne, Jr., had been engaged for the first position, and Mr. Frank Howson for the second. Both of them asked to be excused a very few days in advance of the opening, on account of having much more flattering offers in New York. At the last moment Mr. William F. Burroughs was secured in Mr. Thorne's place, and Mr. Ferd Von Olker in Mr. Howson's place. There were minor difficulties numerous enough to discourage ninety-nine men out of one hundred, but Mr. Henderson had sufficient pluck to overcome them. The following account of the opening from the Providence *Journal* of Dec. 5, 1871, will give an adequate idea of the occasion:

"The long-desired and long waited-for Opera House for the city of Providence was brilliantly inaugurated last evening. The event was of great interest to our citizens, and the locality became a great centre of attraction. Long before the doors were opened a dense crowd gathered upon the sidewalk and in the street in front of the entrance, evincing much eagerness to obtain an early admittance. As soon as an opportunity was afforded there was a rapid influx of people to all parts of the house, which was speedily filled with an

enthusiastic auditory. Before the commencement of the performance it was thoroughly packed. All seemed in excellent spirits, and everywhere from amid the buzz of voices one might overhear expressions of surprise and pleasure at the beauty, neatness and fitness of the house and its decorations. There seemed to be a general feeling of rejoicing at the happy and successful completion of the important enterprise, and the taste and liberality of the builders received unstinted praise."

At eight o'clock the performance of the evening was introduced with a national overture by the orchestra. The first raising of the curtain was greeted by hearty cheers. Upon the stage were Col. Henry Lippitt, President of the Opera House Association, and His Honor Mayor Doyle. Colonel Lippitt delivered a formal address, giving a brief history of the stage in Providence up to that time. He then spoke of the strength of the present building, its arrangements for the extinguishing of fires, modes of egress, etc. He said it had been built from its foundation in ninety working days. The lot cost \$62,000, the building proper, \$90,000, the stage furniture, scenery, etc., \$20,000, chairs, furniture, etc., \$15,000, making the total \$187,000, more money than all the theatres that had been built in the city had cost from the beginning. The "Star Spangled Banner" was then sung by the stock company very creditably, after which a poem, written expressly for the occasion by Gen. C. C. Van Zandt, was read by E. L. Tilton, the stage manager. Mayor Doyle and Manager Henderson then made appropriate addresses.

Following is the poem of General Van Zandt :

Bright fairy Puck ! swifter than rifle shot,  
Put round the earth, thy girdle span of light,  
And tie it in a jewelled lover's knot;  
There by the footlights—on the stage to-night  
'Tis done—it swings as musical as chimes  
Of "sweet bells" never "jangling out of tune,"  
A star-beam ladder—how the fairy climbs  
To dress his elf locks in the mirror moon.  
Now Puck ! leap down ; don't bump your little head  
On the proscenium, you may break a bone—  
Or singe your silver wings, or voice, instead  
*B flat* by falling in the big trombone;  
Here, take my hand, stretch up on your tip-toe,  
Stop winking at the girls—the men will hiss !  
You've lived forever ! now I want to know

*What Roger Williams would have thought of this ?*  
 Why! when he landed on the Seekonk shore  
 The Indians said "*What Cheer ?*" and it's but fair  
 That if he was with us now once more,  
 He'd say "I'll take the best orchestra *chair !*"  
 For, after his long life, so orthodox—  
 His very bones don't fill a *private box*,  
 Yet I believe that stalwart Baptist bore,  
 Wit brightening wisdom's 'neath his thatch of gray,  
 And would have loved the stage, and cried encore!  
 Although he travelled in another way.  
 Never by *stage*—but made *tracts* on the shore.  
 Come, Puck! trot out your memories from their cloisters,  
 These *opening* nights are death to rhymes and oysters.

Throwing up his dimpled heels,  
 Turning somersaults and wheels,  
 Every feather in his wings,  
 Like a song-bird trills and sings;  
 Dancing eyes, like diamonds bright,  
 Tangled curls of sun-rise light,  
 Teeth as white as snowdrops are,  
 Laugh like music from a star,  
 Cheeks as red as sunset hue,  
 Breath like violets wet with dew,  
 Little Puck paints fair and fast,  
 Mystic pictures from the past.

My Lords and Ladies, for upon my word,  
 Each Yankee is a Lady or a Lord;  
 The night was dark, a gale was rising fast,  
 And Newport's spires quivered in the blast,  
 When, in a little building by the shore,  
 Half deafened by the Equinoctial roar,  
 A band of players from across the sea,  
 Acted a queer, old-fashioned comedy—  
 Giving their earnings to sweet charity.  
 There first upon our fields the buskin trod,  
 Where beaded moccasins had pressed the sod.  
 And there, a century since, the fair Muse bore  
 Her first glad offering on New England's shore.  
 Your city has a pleasant pictured page,  
 In history for her annals of the stage,  
 Radiant with stars, how brilliant seems, forsooth,  
 The kingly splendor of the elder Booth;  
 Whether with tragedy he rent the air,  
 Or, with a tender pathos, rich and rare  
 Gave a new music to the Lord's own prayer.  
 Old men are living now, who loved to meet  
 George Frederick Cooke upon the busy street,  
 Heard Hackett roar in *Falstaff*, or perchance,  
 Finn flash his wit's electric-pointed lance;  
 Seen Charles Kean's *Hamlet*, and young Forrest's *Lear*,  
 And mad Joe Cowell play his pranks so queer,

Heard Conway's voice, who sleeps beneath the wave,  
 Or Hazard's fire, quenched in an early grave,  
 Or Charlotte Cushman, seem the blood to freeze  
 In gaunt, prophetic, weird Meg Merrilies.  
 Here Taglioni whirled in firefly maze,  
 Madame Augusta flashed between the plays.  
 Or Fanny Ellsler's sweet, bewitching glance,  
 Made hearts beat cadence to her airy dance.  
 And later still, came Howard, Forbes and Drew,  
 The Palmers' grassy mound is wet with dew.  
 Old Pardey's nights were crowned with an encore,  
 And Varrey "set the table on a roar."  
 Grace strode the stage superbly rich in health,  
 Now he lies palsied—aid him from your wealth!  
 Three times the fire-fiend flung his blazing torch  
 Against the lintels of the Thespian porch.  
 Three times the Drama sank in dark eclipse,  
 The very fruit was ashes on the lips.  
 A truce to memories! We have come to-night,  
 With bursts of music and a flood of light,  
 To dedicate to the Historic Muse  
 This splendid temple; not alone we choose  
 To garland her white limbs and crown her head  
 With flowers plucked from the past, but we instead  
 Would nightly on this mimic stage rehearse,  
 Great thoughts embalmed in purest prose and verse,  
 And elevate the drama from a trade,  
 To what it was when Shakespeare wrote and played,  
 Call a glad smile to lips grown white with care;  
 Show virtue radiant as she is fair.  
 Act comedies culled from "the golden age,"  
 Retouch with living hues each master's page;  
 Call Garrick's spirit from across the sea,  
 And Siddons, stately Queen of Tragedy.  
 Then Science, Art, the Drama, linked will stand,  
 The Sister Graces of this Western Land.

The play selected for the opening was "Fashion," written  
 by Miss Anna Cora Mowatt. The cast was as follows:

Adam Trueman, . . .	Mr. Milton Rainsford.
Count Jolimaitre, . . .	" H. L. Bascomb.
Col. Howard, . . .	" Mark Price.
Mr. Tiffany, . . .	" W. A. Donaldson.
T. Tennyson Twinkle, . . .	" S. Phileo.
Augustus Fogg; . . .	" W. C. Raymond,
J. Timpkins, . . .	" W. Partello.
Gordon, . . .	" J. M. Allison,
Snobson, . . .	" W. P. Sheldon.

Zeke, . . . .	Mr. W. W. Moreland.
Gertrude, . . . .	Miss Isadore Cameron.
Millinette, . . . .	Mrs. Nellie Morant Bowen.
Prudence, . . . .	Miss Ada Monk.
Mrs. Tiffany, . . . .	Miss Isabella Preston.
Seraphina Tiffany, . . . .	Miss Anita Harris.
Angelica, . . . .	Miss R. Rainsford.
Miss Gordina, . . . .	Miss E. Rainsford.

The play was not the best that might have been chosen, but it was selected because it gave the ladies an opportunity to show some handsome dresses.

The original stockholders of the Opera House were : Wm. Henderson, Henry Lippitt, Earl P. Mason, Wm. S. Slater, Lyman B. Frieze, Christopher Lippitt, Alfred Anthony, Henry J. Steere, Wm. Butler, Francis S. Brownell, Wm. H. Reynolds, Henry C. Clarke, Martin C. Stokes, John T. Mauran, James Eddy, Albert C. Eddy, H. A. Hidden, Wm. D. Davis, Caleb Seagraves, Wm. B. Wightman, Henry G. Russell, John Carter Brown, Moses B. I. Goddard, Alfred Read, S. Henry Angell, Henry L. Fairbrother, Edmund Davis, B. F. Thurston.

The second night of the season there was a great contrast in the audience, the house being not more than two-thirds occupied. Fears were expressed that it was going to be a failure after all, but from that night on until the season was nearly closed crowded houses were the rule, and at the matinées the "standing room only" sign was almost invariably displayed.

Mr. W. F. Burroughs, the leading man, joined the company at the beginning of the second week, when the "Romance of a Poor Young Man" was produced. He made a "hit" at once, and was a great favorite throughout the season. Nearly all of the other members became quite popular, especially Misses Cameron and Monk, and Messrs. Sheldon and Tilton.

Stars were unnecessary that season, but Mr. Henderson made some sacrifices in order to allow his patrons to see Parepa Rosa in opera, and Charlotte Cushman. The former came January 29, 30, 31, 1872, in "Trovatore," "Satanella," and "Don Giovanni," and the latter May 29th, 30th, 31st,

and June 1st and 3d in "Henry VIII." and "Guy Manner-  
ing." The most popular plays of the season were "Rose-  
dale," "Dot," "Divorce," "Honeymoon," and "Ours." The  
season continued with one or two short intervals, until August  
10th, Geo. L. Fox, with his "Humpty Dumpty" being there  
the last week.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

1872-1873.

FIRST APPEARANCE HERE OF FANNY JANAUSCHEK—SKETCH OF HER DRAMATIC CAREER—HARRINGTON'S OPERA HOUSE HAS A NUMBER OF GOOD ATTRACTIONS—SECOND SEASON AT THE PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—FIRST APPEARANCE AT THIS HOUSE OF EDWIN BOOTH—FIRST AND ONLY APPEARANCE IN PROVIDENCE OF ADELAIDE NEILSON—SKETCH OF MISS NEILSON—THE "FROG OPERA"—LONG ENGAGEMENTS OF STARS—THE THIRD SEASON BRINGS HARD WORK FOR THE STOCK COMPANY—FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE VOKES FAMILY—SKETCH OF J. K. EMMET.

EVEN with its great advantages the Providence Opera House did not by any means have a monopoly of the best of the dramatic and lyric entertainments in 1872, for Harrington's Opera House continued to get many of the leading stars and combinations, and they were patronized in accordance with their merits. J. K. Emmet came to the latter house January 1st with "Fritz." Fanny Janauschek made her first appearance in this city at that house January 9th, in "Mary Stuart" and "Deborah." This great actress is a Bohemian, and was born in Prague, July 20, 1830. She made her American *début* at the Academy of Music, New York, as *Medea*, Oct. 9, 1867. It is said that her early life was one of privation and hardship, but that her intellect triumphed at last, and from her *début* as *Iphigenia*, at Frankfurt in 1848, her success has been assured. For twelve years she was a favorite in that city, and subsequently appeared in Dresden and other cities of Germany. At Moscow the emperor gave her a diadem of diamonds, and her jewels are said to exceed in value those of any actress on the stage. Up to 1871 she performed only in German, but after a return to Germany and a tour of the continent, she determined to act in English, and has done so with great success. Janauschek has been justly styled a grand actress. Lacking the finish

and grace of Ristori and Rachel, she has excelled in the massive strength of her personations. She is a disciple of what is termed the Northern school of art, and, as such, knows no equal in America. The heroic rôles are hers by right, although in more trifling parts she has shown herself an artist. Among the characters enacted by her with success have been *Adrienne, Medea, Marie Stuart, Brunhild, Bianca, Deborah, Emilia Galotti, Elizabeth, Lady Macbeth, Catherine II., Hermione, Queen Katherine, Iphigenia* and the dual rôle of *Lady Dedlock* and *Hortense*.

January 16th, 17th, E. A. Sothern appeared as *Lord Dundreary*, supported by D. J. Maguinis, Shirley France, Louis Aldrich, C. Leslie Allen, Rachael Noah, Clara Poole, Dora Goldthwaite, etc.; January 27th, Frank Mayo; 29th, Butler Pantomime Company; February 3d, John Murray; 6th, Jane Coombs; 12th, Mrs. G. C. Howard; 16th, 17th, Christine Nilsson, with Annie Louise Cary and Brignoli; 22d, Strakosch Company, with Victor Capoul, Marie Leon Duval, Annie Louise Cary, in "Fra Diavolo;" 23d, 24th, Mlle Zoe; 26th, five nights, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence; March 2d, Albert W. Aiken; 7th, 8th, 9th, Martinetti-Ravel *troupe*; 11th, 12th, Maggie Mitchell, prior to her departure for California; 11th, Buffalo Bill; 22d, Oliver Doud Byron; 29th, Mrs. John Wood, in "Poll" and "Partner Joe," supported by Rachel Noah, George W. Wilson and H. S. Murdoch; May 6th, Tony Pastor, 13th, week, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Hall; 21st, 22d, Mlle. Aimee, first appearance in Providence; 25th, Yankee Locke; June 3d, benefit of John Murray; 17th, Joseph Proctor; July 3d, 4th, Kate Reignolds; 10th, complimentary benefit to Lin W. Harris of this city; August 20th, Oliver Doud Byron; 20th, Mrs. Howard; September 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, George L. Fox; 9th, Tony Pastor; 13th, 14th, Lawrence Barrett, in "Julius Cæsar," and "Man o' Airlie;" 18th, Mrs. Macready; 26th, 27th, 28th, Maggie Mitchell; October 10th, J. J. McCloskey; 11th, 12th, Gen. Tom Thumb and wife, with Commodore Nutt and Minnie Warren; November 4th, 5th, Lydia Thompson; 11th, 12th, Leo Hudson; 18th, Little Nell; 21st, Ada Harland; December 2d, "Black Crook," for two weeks; 28th, 30th, John Thompson.

The second season of the Providence Opera House, which opened Sept. 7, 1872, ran continuously until July 10, 1873, or



about forty-two weeks. This second season was a notable one in many ways. It brought many good stars, some excellent plays, and some of the stars played long engagements. Mr. J. E. Whiting was the leading man. Miss Isadore Cameron was the leading lady for the first part of the season, but she retired and gave place to her sister, Victoria, who divided the honors with Marie Bates, the latter coming to the company when the season was well advanced. Nellie Young was the soubrette, and Frederic O. Smith, now Frederick Bryton, was also a member. The stock company opened with "Eustache," a French play, and rather a weak one. It was put on mainly to give the soubrette and comedian an opportunity to display their ability. The stock company played uninterruptedly until October 30th, when Miss Charlotte Cushman, accompanied by J. B. Booth, came for four performances. Mr. W. E. Sheridan was also added to the cast.

After Miss Cushman, the stock company continued again until November 22d, with "Article 47." Then Edwin Booth came for one week, supported by the stock, with the addition of Frank Bangs, Bella Pateman, R. Dorsey Ogden and Charlotte Crampton. The best of society came out during that engagement, and the house was crowded every night. The next star was Jean Burnside, tall and stately, but rather amateurish in acting. She was a society lady of New York, and I believe she is still on the stage, but in a rather humble capacity. J. M. Ward and Winnetta Montague followed. The latter was very handsome, but not a good drawing card. F. S. Chanfrau and Carlotta Leclercq followed, each for a week. The former had packed houses, but the latter did not. The stock company produced "Saratoga" in an elaborate manner. This was the first of Bronson Howard's plays which made a success. Pauline Lucca, the distinguished prima donna, came with an excellent company and produced "Faust" and "Trovatore." Lester Wallack made his first appearance at the Opera House February 10th, remaining for a week to crowded houses. The next star was the famous Adelaide Neilson, who played her first and only engagement here on that occasion. Her characters were *Juliet* and *Rosalind*. She was sought after and entertained by several distinguished families during her stay here, and one lady gave an immense reception in her honor, two or three hundred people

being present. Miss Neilson did not arrive there until about midnight.

Lillian Adelaide Neilson (born 1850, died 1880), was a native of Saragossa, her father being a Spaniard and her mother English. She appeared upon the stage at the age of fifteen as *Julia* in "The Hunchback." During the next few years she enacted a number of characters successfully. In 1872 she reappeared as *Juliet* in the maturity of her powers, and was recognized as one of the finest exponents of Shaksperian female characters that the modern English stage had produced. Her career in the United States was one of extraordinary success. She visited this country three times, returning the last time in 1880 to Paris, where she died.

Another great event of that season was the first production of the "Frog Opera" by amateurs. This was the 24th and 25th of February, 1873. Miss Blanche Vaughn, of this city, made her first appearance on the stage on this occasion. Since that time she has made a good stage record. The "Frog Opera" attracted crowded houses and "swell" audiences. Mrs. Oates came March 17th with the best company she ever had with her. She jumped into immediate favor, had houses crowded to the utmost capacity for a week, and came back at the end of the month with the same success. For several seasons she played two engagements each season, of one week each, and always to full houses. No star was more popular than she at that time, but in later years she failed to draw even at a much cheaper house. She was born in Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 29, 1849, and was educated in a convent. Her maiden name was Merritt. She had a dashing style, with the *chic* of a French artist. She was married three times. During the latter part of her career she grew to be very stout.

The other stars who came that season were Lillian Eldridge, Charles R. Thorne, Jr., J. W. Albaugh and wife (the latter being a sister of Maggie Mitchell), John E. Owens, F. S. Chanfrau, Baker and Farron, Kate Fisher, and George L. Fox. Messrs. Thorne, Wallack, and Chanfrau each played two weeks continuously to large houses, and Kate Fisher's engagement was extended to three weeks. This was Baker & Farron's first visit to Providence as stars, but they became so popular that every successive visit of theirs for years was

certain to command crowded houses. Taken as a whole, the season might be called good, bad, and indifferent. The stock company had no great successes such as in the previous seasons, "Saratoga" being the only play which brought out full houses. Some of the members lost money when they took their benefits, while only two of the eight who tried this means of adding to their income made a complete success.

The third season at the Providence Opera House was probably as full of hard work as the members of any stock company ever experienced. They were frequently obliged to study a new play for every night in the week, as they supported all the dramatic stars who came that season, with the exception of Salvini. To give an illustration of what was done, it is only necessary to state that the number of plays and operas presented in the forty-two weeks was 136. The company consisted of Misses Isadore Cameron, Nellie Jones, M. A. Pennoyer, Victoria Cameron, Jennie Bryant, Alice Marie, Mrs. W. P. Sheldon, Monte Ransom, Ida Phillips, Lizzie Aldrich, Misses Fairman and Knapp, and Messrs. Edwin F. Thorne, E. L. Tilton, W. A. Donaldson, W. P. Sheldon, J. Burrows, J. L. Ashton, J. E. Ince, H. L. Bascomb, Frank Cotter, F. O. Smith, J. Chrystal, M. Millwood, Messrs. Deering and Thomas. The regular season opened September 10th with "Town and Country." There was a brief preliminary season in which J. W. Albaugh and wife appeared, supported by their Albany company, and J. H. Stoddart came as a star, supported by Rockwell & Ringgold's company. In the latter were Miss Ione Burke, a pleasing vocalist, and Miss Julia Gaylord, who has since become famous in Europe as a *prima donna* in Carl Rosa's company. The stock company struggled for several weeks with such plays as "Pizarro," "Money and Misery," "Oliver Twist," "Black Eyed Susan," "Peril," "Far West," "Sea of Ice," "Ragpicker of Paris," "Ben Bolt," "London After Dark," "Brother Bill and Me," "Willow Copse," "Flying Dutchman," "Nick of the Woods," "The Assassin Husband," "Moll Pitcher," "Michael Erle," "Last Days of Pompeii," "Yankee Jack," "Workmen of New York," "Rosina Meadows," "Robert Macaire," "Trumps," "Dick Turpin," "Nick Whiffles," "Battle of Fredericksburg," etc. The audiences were not large, except in the gallery, during the production of these plays, and it

was quite a relief when Pauline Lucca came with her opera company for one evening, October 24th. After that the stock kept on until December 1st, when Mrs. Oates came for a week, with her usual success. She was followed by Edwin Booth, who played two weeks successively to crowded houses, presenting a different play at nearly every performance. He was supported by the regular stock company, and with their study, rehearsals and performances they had little time to sleep and eat those two weeks, and none at all for pleasure.

The next star was J. B. Roberts, who presented "Faust and Marguerite," and this was undoubtedly the poorest engagement ever played by any star in Providence. It is doubtful if the receipts reached \$100 at any performance. He gave up the engagement on Friday night. Then came Clara Morris, her first engagement in Providence. She appeared in the "Geneva Cross," and met with great success, financially and artistically. Frank Mayo, Mrs. Chanfrau, E. L. Davenport, Jane Coombs, Christine Nilsson, the Majiltons, Yankee Locke, Ettie Henderson, Clara Louise Kellogg, F. S. Chanfrau, Edwin Adams, Salvini, Carlotta Leclercq, Lydia Thompson, Kate Fisher and Hernandez Foster were the other stars of that season. The Vokes Family made their first appearance here March 16, 1874, and created a *furor*. Standing room was at a premium during the engagement and each subsequent engagement of this family was equally successful.

The grand operas presented that season were as follows: Lucca, "Favorita;" Christine Nilsson, "Huguenots" and "Martha;" Kellogg, "Marriage of Figaro," "Faust" and "Bohemian Girl." All of these were liberally patronized and all at largely increased prices. The best seats during Nilsson's engagement were \$4 each, and not less than \$2 when the other artists named were here.

The benefits to members of the stock company were as disastrous as they were the previous season. Mr. F. O. Smith, was, however, quite successful, because Mr. Dennis O'Reilly appeared upon that occasion as *Gaston* in the "Iron Mask."

The principal attractions in Harrington's Opera House in 1873 were as follows: January 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, Wallace Sisters' Burlesque Company; January 18th, 19th, 20th, Buf-

falo Bill, with Texas Jack and Ned Buntline ; February 24th, 25th, 26th, Robert McWade ; March 3d, 4th, Mr. and Mrs. Dion Boucicault in "Kerry," "Night and Morning," etc. ; February 6th, Little Nell ; February 19th, Joseph Jefferson ; April 1st, Janauschek in "Chesney Wold ;" April 16th, 17th, Maggie Mitchell ; April 18th, 19th, Tony Pastor ; April 22d, 23d, John Murray in "Man Without a Country ;" May 7th, John C. Robinson ; May 12th, 13th, 14th, J. H. Budworth ; May 22d, 23d, Oliver Doud Byron ; August 25th, Helen Temple in "New Magdalen ;" September 5th, 6th, Little Nell ; September 9th, 10th, Lucille Western ; September 11th, Clara Norris ; September 13th, Maffiitt and Bartholomew ; September 22d, 23d, Tremaine Brothers ; September 27th, Boston Dramatic Company ; October 3d, 4th, Lydia Thompson ; October 13th, 14th, 15th, George L. Fox in "Around the Clock," "Midsummer Night's Dream," etc. ; October 23d, Mrs. Howard ; October 31st, Lotta ; November 5th, 6th, Mlle. Zoe ; November 12th, J. K. Emmet ; December 1st, Salvini, in "The Gladiator ;" December 2d, Vokes Family ; December 25th, C. T. Parsloe in "Streets of New York."

J. K. Emmet was born in St. Louis, Mo., March 13, 1841, and died at Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, June 15, 1891. His first occupation was that of a sign painter, and he then became a drummer boy in the army. Shortly afterward he tried to do a German specialty in Cincinnati, and was so successful that he had no difficulty in getting an engagement. In 1868 he played with Dan Bryant's minstrels in New York, and became a great favorite in character songs in German dialect. Then he appeared in a play written for him by Charles Gayler, and soon rose to fame and fortune. It is estimated that he was worth upwards of half a million of dollars. His songs at one time were sung all over the country. His histrionic success was largely due to his genial face, sympathetic manner, his innate love of fun and the sweet voice with which he sang his own songs. He had many imitators but no equals. For twenty years he maintained his phenomenal prosperity against all comers and in spite of certain drawbacks. He was beloved by children and an immense favorite with women, who thronged his performances.

## CHAPTER XIX.

1874—1875.

CLOSING OF HARRINGTON'S OPERA HOUSE AND REOPENING OF ACADEMY OF MUSIC—ACADEMY PARTIALLY DESTROYED BY FIRE—FOURTH SEASON AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE BEGINS DISCOURAGINGLY—LIST OF THE STOCK COMPANY AND STARS—GREAT PRODUCTION OF THE "TWO ORPHANS"—JOHN T. RAYMOND'S FIRST APPEARANCE AS "COLONEL SELLERS"—SKETCH OF MR. RAYMOND—ACADEMY OF MUSIC ATTRACTIONS—SEVERAL NEW STARS AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—GREAT CAST OF "JULIUS CÆSAR"—MRS. SIDDONS'S GREAT WEEK—SKETCHES OF JOHN McCULLOUGH AND EDWIN ADAMS.

THERE were two events of considerable importance in 1874, namely: the closing of Harrington's Opera House, and the reopening of the Academy of Music. The latter had been closed since 1871. It was partially destroyed by fire June 28, 1873, but the damages had been repaired and the house was again in competition. There were but few dramatic attractions upon its stage, however, that year. Several minstrel companies, a few variety organizations, and a number of panoramas were the occupants of the house. Cole's Dramatic Company, H. G. Clarke's Company, the Boston Theatre Company, Buffalo Bill, and Charles T. Howard's Company played there at different times during the year.

Harrington's Opera House continued until August 1st, when Callender's Minstrels gave the closing performance. The attractions at this house that year were as follows: January 3d, Tennie C. Claflin as *Portia*; 9th, 10th, the Lingards; 16th, 17th, Buffalo Bill; 20th, testimonial benefit to Archie Stalker; 26th, Dollie Bidwell; 28th, "Black Crook," reconstructed; February 23d, Martinetti-Ravel; March 2d, 3d, Howard Star Company; 5th, Howard, Langrishe and Carle's "Black Crook;" 9th, E. A. Sothern; 16th, "Ten Nights in

a Bar Room," with little Minnie Maddern, Adah Richmond, Gus Williams and Harry Bloodgood in the cast; April 7th, Mrs. Howard as *Topsey*; 17th, 18th, Tony Pastor; 24th, Ada Gray; June 3d, five nights, George L. Fox; July 4th, Flora Myers; 31st, August 1st, closing night.

The first half of the fourth season at the Providence Opera House must have been decidedly discouraging to the manager. There was hardly one good house during the first three months. Melodrama, military drama, society plays, comedies, tragedies, farces were all tried for several weeks, but failed to "catch on." The preliminary season opened August 24th, with the "Seven Dwarfs," which was presented by a good company, but failed to draw. The Majiltons followed, with a little better success. Then came the "Mirror of Ireland," to weak houses. The regular stock opened on Saturday evening, September 12th. The principal members were J. C. Padgett, W. F. Burroughs, Sid Smith, H. C. Norman, Walter Treville, F. G. Cotter, Harry Harwood, Emmie Wilmot, Lizzie Mahon, Belle Bailey and M. A. Pennoyer. The opening plays were "Woman Keeps a Secret," and "Snow Bird." Other plays which immediately followed were "Clouds," "Griffith Gaunt," "Blow for Blow," "Little Emily," "School for Scandal," "Frou Frou," "Foul Play," "Not Guilty," "Flash of Lightning," etc. Not one of these was what might be called a success, and the manager must have been considerably out of pocket.

The Vokes Family came for a single night, October 3d, and that was the first full house of the season. Maffit and Bartholomew, and the Stoddard Company, which followed, played to only fair audiences. Barney Williams, the great Irish comedian, who had hitherto been so popular here that crowded houses always awaited him, gave up his week's engagement at the end of the third night, telling Manager Henderson that it was no use for him to go on further; that it was evident the public didn't want him, and he didn't want any manager to lose money on his account.

Mr. Henderson recovered a portion of his losses when Mrs. Oates came, and still more when Janauschek followed soon after. About the last of December business materially improved. Baker and Farron came for two weeks to full houses, Lester Wallack followed for eight nights, to crowded

audiences. Frank Mayo succeeded with "Davy Crockett," which was then in its infancy. He remained a second week, with "The Streets of New York." Then came the great stock company success, equal to anything ever known. It was the "Two Orphans." People were turned away at every one of the sixteen performances given of it. Thousands still remember how well the characters seemed to fit those who impersonated them; how well Lizzie Mahon enacted the blind *Louise*; with what force Emmie Wilmot impersonated *Henriette*; what a glorious *Mother Frochard* Mrs. Pennoyer made; what a villainous *Jacques* Mr. Treville gave; what success Messrs. Burroughs and Padgett met with, and they also remember that the scenic display was by far the best that Mr. Henderson had ever given. The run of the piece would have been much longer but for its interruption by previous engagements with stars. It was put on again near the close of the season, but it was after the weather had become too warm for most of the theatre-goers.

One of the events of that season was the appearance of the Kellogg Opera *troupe* for a whole week. The houses were crowded, and seats in the parquette readily sold for \$2 each. The operas given were "Fra Diavolo," "Trovatore," "Mignon," "Ernani," "Faust," "Bohemian Girl," and "Martha."

March 31st, April 1st and 2d, the "Game of Chess" was brought out under the management of W. S. Daboll. It was repeated April 19th.

Lawrence Barrett played a good week's engagement that season. He appeared in Shakspearian plays mostly, but on Friday night and Saturday afternoon he gave his masterly performance of *Jamie Harebell* in the "Man o' Airlee," and at the matinée there were a large number of church people present, who go to the theatres only about once in ten years.

John T. Raymond came here for the first time that year as a star, with his *Colonel Sellers*. Among the other events of the season were the last appearance here of Lucille Western, and the first and only appearance of Kate Field. Taken altogether the season proved one of average profit with its predecessors, notwithstanding the bad beginning.

John T. Raymond was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1836.



His right name was John O'Brien, and he first appeared on the stage at Rochester, New York, as *Lopez*, in "The Honey-moon," in 1853. The first part that brought him into prominence was *Asa Trenchard* in "Our American Cousin." This character may be said to have made Raymond, as much as *Lord Dundreary* in the same play undoubtedly made Sothorn. This play first appeared at Laura Keene's Theatre, New York, in 1861. One of his greatest successes was made in Mark Twain's dramatized version of his "Gilded Age." He first appeared in the character of *Colonel Sellers* in this play in 1873, and its success was everywhere instantaneous, and, in spite of other successes, made more recently, the names of Raymond and *Colonel Sellers* are in the memory of play-goers of this generation convertible terms. He died in Evansville, Indiana, on April 21, 1887.

Having no opposition other than the Providence Opera House in 1875, the Academy of Music was frequently occupied by stars and travelling combinations. Among the dramatic attractions appearing there were the following: January 9th, Lingard Comedy Company; 22d, 23d, Wallace Sisters; 29th, 30th, Grau & Chizzola's Lyceum Theatre Company; February 25th, 26th, 27th, John Thompson's Company; March 2d, 3d, John Stetson's Howard Athenæum Company; 4th, 5th, 6th, George L. Fox; 11th, Barnabee Operetta Company; April 8, Mme Ristori; 19th, 20th, Fifth Avenue Theatre Company; 23d, 24th, Tony Pastor; 27th, Archie Stalker; May 1st, 2d, Bessie Darling Company; September 11th, Haymarket Theatre Company; 13th, 14th, 15th, Charlotte Thompson; October 8th, 9th, 10th, Harrigan and Hart; November 11th, 12th, Fleming's "Around the World;" December 25th, T. Charles Howard. Many of these companies came to this house two or three times that season, and there were besides a large number of minstrel companies, etc.

The fifth season at the Providence Opera House was one of the most memorable in the history of the house. It was not only the first appearance at that house of the ever-popular star, Maggie Mitchell, but it also witnessed the first appearance there of John McCullough, of George Rignold, of Theresa Titiens, of George Honey, of the great cast in

"Julius Cæsar," of Barry Sullivan, of Buffalo Bill, of Harrigan and Hart, of Mrs. Scott Siddons, etc. The majority of these stars attracted immense audiences, and the manager, Mr. Henderson, would have reaped a rich harvest but for the excessive rent which he had to pay and the frequent losses which his stock company made for him. The season opened better than any of its predecessors, because the original Vokes Family was there the first week, beginning September 6th. They had made themselves known to Providence audiences the previous year, and, although the weather was decidedly hot, there were no vacant seats during their engagement. They were all there: Jessie, Victoria, Rosina, Fred. and Fawdon, and their patrons enjoyed their "Belles in the Kitchen," "Fun in a Fog," "The Wrong Man in the Right Place," etc. After the Vokes came the stock company, the principal members of which were Ida Savory, Josie Bailey, Nannie Egberts, Mrs. Pennoyer, Ada Dow, Ida Waterman, William H. Power, W. P. Sheldon, E. L. Tilton, C. A. Stedman, Walter Treville, I. N. Beers, Harry Harwood, and H. B. Norman. The opening was on Saturday night, Sept. 11, 1875, and a double bill was presented, namely: "Woman's Life" and Wandering Boys." Manager Henderson was favorable to Saturday night openings for some reason or other. The stock company did not make any substantial success during the season, although Miss Ida Savory, who, by the way, was a very handsome young lady, distinguished herself several times in the support of stars, and also won merited praise by her superb impersonation of *Galatea* in the play of "Pygmalion and Galatea," as well as by a dialect character part in the "Cherry Tree Inn."

As previously stated, Maggie Mitchell played her first engagement at this house that season, and she had a succession of crowded houses. Mrs. Oates followed her with equal success. Barry Sullivan came after a week's intermission, and he also had crowded houses. Then came the Kellogg Opera Company, with William Castle, Henry Peakes, Mrs. Jennie Van Zandt, and other good people. The operas were "Mignon" and "Carmen." The "Marriage of Figaro" was announced, but as Miss Kellogg was ill, a change was made. "Henry V.," with the handsome George Rignold, was one of the great sensations of the season. It was one of the most

notable productions ever witnessed here. There were upwards of forty speaking parts, and an auxiliary force of upwards of one hundred people. The scenery was very handsome, and it was "the talk of the town." Jarrett & Palmer's "Two Orphans" Company, with Frank Bangs, Harry Weaver, E. K. Collier, Rosa Rand, Rose Lisle and others, made a great success for a week. No less a success was John T. Raymond, who followed. Lawrence Barrett had a profitable week, beginning December 13th. Edwin Adams was one of the stars of that season, but his business was not good. F. S. Chanfrau had crowded houses for two weeks, and among the characters he presented was that of *Salem Scudder* in the "Octoroon." Mrs. Scott Siddons, who had not been on the histrionic stage for some time, was induced by her friends to accept an engagement. Mr. Henderson gave her \$500 for the week, and probably made four or five times that amount out of the engagement, as the house was packed at every performance, and at the Saturday matinée hundreds of people were turned away, even after the orchestra members had been removed to the stage. Among the plays which she presented was a little gem entitled, "King Rene's Daughter," in which she took the part of *Iolanthe*, a blind girl. Never was an artist more heartily applauded by a Providence audience than she was on that occasion.

E. A. Sothern, accompanied by Linda Dietz, was one of the very profitable stars of that season. Theresa Titiens, the great operatic artist, came with the support of Tom Karl, Brignoli, Tagliapietra, and others, and gave "Norma" and "Trovatore" to good houses. "Julius Cæsar," with its great cast, Barrett as *Cassius*, Bangs as *Marc Antony*, Levick as *Cæsar*, and Davenport as *Brutus*, were here May 11th, 12th and 13th, 1876, with houses crowded to the doors. Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack and the "peerless Morlacchi" made their first visit, and a profitable one it was. Some of the stars who came that season, who did not do as well as those mentioned above, were Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Charlotte Thompson, George F. Rowe, E. T. Stetson and George Honey. One other attraction which remained for nine nights, and which filled the houses as well as created a sensation, was "Around the World in Eighty Days." This was its first production here, and it was a grand one in every respect.

It has never been done here so well since that time. The season closed June 3d, having continued nearly forty weeks.

John McCullough was born near Londonderry in 1832, and was brought to this country by his father in 1842. Joining an amateur association in Philadelphia, he made his *début* at the Arch Street Theatre, Aug. 15, 1857, as the *Servant* in "The Belle's Stratagem." His salary as an actor was at first four dollars a week; the following season it was increased to ten dollars, and his duties extended to the representation of the "heavies." In 1860-1 he was at the Howard in Boston, under Davenport, and the following season engaged to support Forrest, and was with him until 1866. In that year McCullough took up his abode in California, managing in San Francisco with gratifying success, till the last two years he remained there, when he lost more than he had made. No other man on the stage ever made more sincere friends than genial John McCullough. He died in 1885.

Edwin Adams was born at Medford, Mass., 1834. He was one of the most promising and versatile actors that ever trod the American stage. First appeared in 1853 at the National Theatre, Boston, as *Stephen* in "The Hunchback," and in 1854 in the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, as *Charles Woodley* in "The Soldier's Daughter." He made his first great hit in Baltimore in 1863 as *Enoch Arden*. He became famous in England and also in Australia, in *Rover*, *Claude Melnotte*, *Frank Hawthorne*, in "Men of the Day;" and, after his health began to fail, he showed high promise in *Adrian* in "The Heretic," and in *Macbeth*. His *William* in "Black Eyed Susan," was very fine. He died at Philadelphia Oct. 28, 1877, aged forty-three.

## CHAPTER XX.

1876-1877.

GLOBE THEATRE COMPANY IN "OUR BOYS"—GREAT CAST OF "JULIUS CÆSAR" FOR A SECOND TIME—SIXTH SEASON AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—DALY'S COMPANY IN "PIQUE"—MAGGIE MITCHELL PLAYS TWO WEEKS—FIRST APPEARANCE OF ADA REHAN IN PROVIDENCE—SKETCH OF MISS REHAN—PALMER'S FINE COMPANY IN THE "DANICHEFFS"—SKETCH OF MARY ANDERSON—A DISGRACEFUL OCCURRENCE AT THE OPERA HOUSE—SKETCH OF N. C. GOODWIN.

THERE were two dramatic companies at the Academy of Music in 1876, which attracted immense houses.

They were the Globe Theatre Company of Boston, in "Our Boys," and the great "Julius Cæsar" Company. In the former were John C. Cowper, George Honey, Owen Marlowe, H. S. Murdock, Katherine Rogers and Maude Granger. All of the male portion of the company have since passed away. The "Julius Cæsar" Company had but one change in the great quartette since its former appearance at the Providence Opera House, Fred. Warde taking the place of Mr. Bangs. Of the other dramatic attractions at the Academy of Music that year there were February 21st, Murray Dramatic Company; March 3d, 4th, George L. Fox; March 9th, 10th, 11th, "Our Boys" Company; March 20th, 21st, 22d, the same; April 3d, 4th, 5th, Shook & Palmer's Union Square Company, with Rose Eytinge as the star; April 11th, Stetson's Howard Athenæum Company; April 17th, Frank Frayne; September 2d, Clinton Eddy; November 14th, 15th, Dow Opera Company, an excellent organization; November 22d, "Julius Cæsar" Combination. There were about the usual number of minstrel and variety organizations.

At the Providence Opera House, Manager Henderson evidently didn't know just what to do at the beginning of the sixth season about engaging a stock com-

pany. Business had not been good for two or three seasons, except with stars and combinations, but there were not yet a sufficient number of stars who carried supporting companies to occupy much more than one-half of the season. He opened Monday, August 28th, with the "Black Crook," under the management of T. Charles Howard. He had the Miacio Family with him, and also Charles and Carrie Austin in drill and bayonet exercises. The company was a fair one.

The first really good attraction was Augustin Daly's company in "Pique," the cast including D. H. Harkins, W. H. Crisp, Owen Fawcett, C. D. Bainbridge, B. T. Ringgold, Misses Jeffreys Lewis, Ada Gilman and Alice Gray.

Maggie Mitchell came in October for two weeks, supported by the Leland Opera House Company, of Albany, the leading woman of which was Ada Rehan, who is now so much worshipped by the patrons of Daly's Theatre in New York. Besides her there were two good leading men in the company, William Harris and R. Fulton Russell. The first week was devoted to the production of "Mignon," written by James B. Runnion, of the Chicago *Tribune*, and he was here to superintend it. The second week a comedy called "Becky Mix," written especially for the star by Clifton W. Tayleure, was brought out. It was a pretty clever piece, but it died an early death.

Stuart Robson came that season with his play of "Two Men of Sandy Bar," and made one of the most lamentable failures ever known here. There were hardly one hundred people in the house at any one performance, and those who did go always looked as if they had been severely punished for something they were not guilty of. There were excellent people in the company, too, Mark Bates, Hart Conway, Charles T. Parsloe, and Laura Don, being in the cast.

The spectacular play of "Paolo," by the Kiralfys, was another lamentable failure. It was a very expensive company, with rich scenery, etc., but the receipts were less than two hundred dollars per night.

During Janauschek's engagement in the middle of November, Mr. Henderson inserted the following card both in the newspapers and in the programme: "The Opera House will close after to-night's performance, to open Thursday, November 23d, with entire new scenery, new decorations, and new

carpets in front of the house, and a new stock company. Manager Henderson is confident the opening night will reveal to the public of Providence and vicinity one of the handsomest arranged and decorated opera houses in this or any other country. The scenery has been for several weeks under the painter's hands, and the company will be of such material as to warrant the public in dispensing with *cheap stars*.

This is the only time that Manager Henderson did not fulfill his promises to the public. He was called a very close man, but he always paid his bills; always paid what he agreed to, and often made a heavy outlay in scenery, as in the case of "Rosedale," the "Two Orphans," "Divorce," etc. The stock company which he presented this time had as principals Emily Baker, Augusta Chambers, Georgie Langley, Isabella Preston, Belle Melville, Henry P. Mitchell, George Jordan, S. E. Springer, A. H. Hastings, and I. N. Beers. It did not meet with success.

Soldene was here that season with the best company she ever had. "Sardanapalus," with Frank Bangs, Louis Aldrich, E. F. Knowles, and Agnes Booth, was a notable production. It had a large cast, fine scenery, and an Italian ballet of fifty dancers.

H. J. Montague, the handsome actor from Wallack's, came for three nights and had good houses. He received numerous notes from the young girls of Providence while he was here, and after the Saturday *matinée* there were a dozen or more waiting in the parlor of the City Hotel, eager to catch a glimpse of him when he came in, just to see how he looked off the stage.

Edwin Booth played an engagement of two weeks, beginning April 16th, giving his famous impersonation of *Bertuccio* in the "Fool's Revenge" two or three times.

The Hoffman Comic Opera Company, Hartz, the magician, Carncross and Dixey, Harrigan and Hart, Adah Richmond, Mr. and Mrs. Florence, Lewis Morrison, Sothern and Fechter, were attractions of that season.

Near the close Palmer's fine company, including Charles R. Thorne, James O'Neill, Louis James, Fanny Morant, Sara Jewett and Ida Jeffreys, came and produced the "Danieffs," making a sensation.

Miss Ada Rehan was born in the city of Limerick on April 22, 1860, was taken to America when only six years of age, and has made the United States her home ever since. It was quite by accident that she joined the theatrical profession. She was travelling for pleasure with her sister and brother-in-law. A member of his company was taken ill, and Miss Rehan volunteered to "go on" and play the part, that of an old crone, and so made her *début*. The next year she was in Mrs. Drew's stock company in Philadelphia. Then she went to the Louisville Theatre, where she played *Ophelia* to Mr. Booth's *Hamlet*, *Virginia* with Mr. John McCullough, and leading juvenile parts in support of other stars. These, with a season at Albany and Baltimore theatres, were a good schooling, and gave her experience before Mr. Augustin Daly engaged her for his present company, and she has been under his management ever since. She made her New York *début* in 1879. She is a sister of Mrs. Oliver Doud Byron.

Lotta began at the Academy of Music in 1877, her dates being January 1st and 2d. Then came the Boston Museum Company, 12th. The other principal attractions of a dramatic and musical nature were as follows: January 27th, Kit Carson, Jr.; February 16th, 17th, Juvenile Opera Company; March 14th, 15th, John T. Raymond; April 9th, 10th, Broadway Theatre Company; June 26th, 27th, Mose Fiske in war drama; November 5th, 6th, 7th, "Pink Dominoes." Half a dozen minstrel companies, one or two magical performances, etc., completed the attractions at this house for the year.

The days of stock companies at the Providence Opera House ended with the sixth season, 1876-7, and that also ended Mr. Henderson's management. After Mr. Henderson left Providence he took the management of the Standard Theatre in New York, where he was very successful. At the time of his death, which occurred in 1890, he was manager of the Academy of Music in Jersey City. His stage career began in 1851, and as an actor he supported nearly all the principal stars in the country. Before coming to Providence he had managed two theatres in Pittsburg, where he made a fortune. He owned thousands of dollars' worth of real estate at Long



Branch, and was one of the wealthiest men in the profession, as well as one of the most honorable.

His wife, Ettie Henderson, now the lessee of the Academy of Music in Jersey City, has often appeared as a star before Providence audiences. She is very talented, thoroughly proficient in music, and has written and adapted many successful plays, among them being "Lena, the Street Singer," "Tot, the Match Girl," "Our Heroes," "Marriage," "Bound Forever," "Claire and the Forge Master," "Almost a Life," etc.

Mr. David O. Black was Mr. Henderson's successor, and the season was a good one, not only financially, but many of the best stars and combinations were seen for the first time in this house. The season continued almost uninterruptedly from the 10th of August, 1877, to the 11th of June, 1878. It opened with Haverly's Minstrels, then the leading organization of the kind, and, although the weather was extremely hot, the houses were full. Barlow and Wilson followed soon afterwards and they also did an excellent business. The "Corsair," Rentz Minstrels, and Tony Pastor came early in the season, all to full houses. Among some of the other great successes were Augustine Daly's company, Kate Claxton, Mrs. Oates, Joseph Murphy, Buffalo Bill, Janauschek, Maggie Mitchell, Frank Mayo, the "Drummer Boy," Denman Thompson, Lotta, the Morris Brothers' Minstrels, Joseph Jefferson, Lawrence Barrett, John E. Owens, Fanny Davenport, Barlow, Wilson, Primrose and West, George Rigbold, Texas Jack, the Frog Opera, Joe Emmet, John T. Raymond, the Williamsons in "Struck Oil," John Stetson's "Robin Hood" Company, Jarrett and Palmer's great "Uncle Tom's Cabin Company, Clara Morris, McKee Rankin, William Horace Lingard, Robson and Crane (their first visit), the Kellogg Opera Company, with Annie Louise Cary and Marie Rose, the San Francisco Minstrels and Eliza Weathersby and Nat Goodwin. Several of the companies played two engagements that season, including Haverly's Minstrels, the "Shaughraun," Harry Bloodgood, Tony Pastor, the Frog Opera, Mrs. Oates, etc. The principal event was the first appearance in Providence of Mary Anderson, who came for two nights only, and attracted the very largest and most fashionable audiences of the season. The dates of her appearance here were May 7th and 8th.

Mary Anderson was born at Sacramento, California, in 1859. Her father died three years after her birth, fighting under the Confederate flag. Miss Anderson was brought up at Louisville, Kentucky, where her stepfather practiced medicine, having given up his plantation after the war. Her dramatic tastes showed themselves from her childhood. When she was about thirteen, she saw Booth in "Richard III.," and her imagination was instantly fired. She entreated to be allowed to adopt the stage as a profession, and after much opposition her parents consented and gave her lessons from the best instructors. At sixteen she made her *début* as *Juliet*. For some years she acted all over the States and Canada in various parts, and she had great success in London during her seasons at the Lyceum Theatre in 1884 and 1885. In 1889 she revisited America, and made a most successful tour of the chief cities, but her health broke down, and she had to return to England before she had filled all her engagements. She is now married, and has retired from the stage.

Another great event of that season was the second visit of the "Shaughraun" Company. John A. Mackay then impersonated *Conn*, the part usually played by Mr. Boucicault. Only a short time previous, in one of the Southern cities, Nashville, I believe, the "wake" scene had created considerable disturbance in the audience. The news of the disturbance had reached Providence, and some of the "toughs" determined to repeat it here. The following account, taken from the Providence *Journal* of April 26, 1878, gives the particulars of this "Disgraceful Occurrence :"

"'Conn, the Shaughraun,' was presented at the Opera House last evening, to a fair audience. The play was very well presented, and ran smoothly up to the third act, in which occurs a representation of an Irish wake over the supposed dead body of *Conn*. The 'keeners' had just taken their places, and the long wail was beginning to rise, when a missile, evidently a piece of turnip, struck the stage. Another quickly followed, and then half a dozen more came whizzing over the heads of the audience. Some of the missiles struck pretty close to the performers, and there was a sudden cessation of the play. Eggs then began to be thrown, and the ladies on the stage hastily retired. The gallery was hissing sharply,

and the order was given for lowering of the curtain. The curtain was not down more than half a minute when it went up again, *Conn* lay on the shutter as cool as could be, and the thread of the dialogue was taken up where it had broken off, except that the 'keening' was left out. Several more eggs were thrown, and the hissing was so loud as to almost drown the voices of the actors. Comparatively few eggs, however, were thrown after the rising of the curtain, but the hissing continued all through the scene. The next scene passed without interruption or noticeable features, except that *Conn*, who had come to life, having occasion to call a couple of men on the stage 'cowards,' added, 'like your hissing friends up there.' At this a burst of hissing arose in the gallery, while the occupants of the parquette and dress circle applauded furiously. The applause carried the day, as far as continuance went, and the play was finished without further interruption."

There was only one police officer in the gallery when the egging began. The eggs were not thrown by boys, but by young men. They came from several portions of the gallery. The officer got hold of one man whom he saw throw an egg, but the crowd rushed in and threw the officer down, and the man escaped. Two men were ordered out of the gallery and they left. By the time the officer on duty down stairs had reached the gallery the disturbance was checked. Several eggs were found in the gallery after the close of the performance.

The following day, April 27th, the *Journal* said :

"'Conn, the Shaughraun,' was presented again last evening, and the wake scene passed without serious interruption. There were a few hisses when the 'keeners' came on, and one man is alleged to have tried to make some additional disturbance. At any rate he was taken out of the gallery by the police, and there was outward peace after that. The wake scene was very much shortened, in fact was deprived of most of its characteristic features. The Opera House looked all the evening as if it was under martial law. There were police officers in about every other row of seats, upstairs and down, and two officers sat at the front of the orchestra, with their backs to the stage, and never took their eyes off the gallery the whole evening. When the confusion occasioned

by the removal of the objectionable gallery god, who, by the way, was locked up at the Fifth Station, broke out, there was an uprising of police which would have awed down a small insurrection."

That year also brought here for the first time as a star Mr. N. C. Goodwin.

Nat. C. Goodwin, the distinguished comedian, was born in Boston July 25, 1857. He attended first the grammar school, then the high school, of Boston, and subsequently graduated from the little "Blue College" of Farmington, Maine. During the period of his schooling he was noted for his wonderful power of mimicry. He also developed the faculty for committing long essays to memory in a remarkable degree. Having, in 1873, graduated from the college just spoken of, he became a clerk in the dry goods house of Wellington Brothers, of Boston, where he remained for two months. Then he secured a place with B. L. Solomon's Sons, upholsterers, where he managed to remain a whole month. From here he went to Providence and was engaged in William Henderson's Providence Opera House Stock Company, and was cast for the part of *Sir George Hounslow*; in the melodrama of "The Bottle." He was given his part at two o'clock in the afternoon, and at four he was letter perfect. His college training stood him in hand, and he at once won the admiration of every member of the company. The manager declared that in the young man Goodwin he had found a jewel. Intelligent, bright and witty, they all predicted a great future for him. At last evening came, and Nat. was "eager for the fray." When the call boy announced his turn he stepped upon the stage, and, having taken his place indicated by the manager at the afternoon rehearsal, waited a second for his cue, and, at the proper moment, raised his arm in the attitude of a command, opened his lips, but not a single sound escaped them. He stood there, spell-bound and speechless, a horrible victim of stage fright. He does not remember how he escaped from the theatre, but when his senses had returned he found himself at the depot dressed just as he had appeared on the stage—wig, grease-paint, costume and all. In this condition he boarded the first train for Boston, vowing that never more would he attempt to become an actor. However, he studied elocution for the next six months with Wyzeman

Marshall, and did some "barnstorming" around Boston, and finally began imitations of prominent people, which, proving successful, he went to New York, and in 1875 was engaged by Tony Pastor, where he continued his imitations in costume, meeting with instantaneous success. Soon after he joined E. E. Rice's company playing *Le Blanc* in "Evangeline" and winning great success. His advancement was then steady and sure. At the time of the famous dramatic festival in Cincinnati he was the principal comedian, a great honor, as the casts included nearly all the prominent stars in the country.

Mr. Goodwin tells the story of his *début* here in the following humorous manner :

"Before I ever went on the stage I used to take part in amateur affairs in my mother's parlors in Boston, and I bothered Charlie Thorne to death to get me a place in some company. My friends also said that they were convinced I had talents. So, finally, Thorne secured me a position in a company then playing a piece called "A Bottle." Providence was to be the place where I made my *début* and the part assigned me was the old-time gentlemanly villain who comes to the village and captures the heart of the rustic beauty. - I had rehearsed several times and was sure I knew it all. The heroine was to rush on with a scream and I run after her; but she hadn't rehearsed the scream with me, so when she dashed on and gave an unearthly yell it nearly frightened me to death. I stubbed my toe, fell sprawling, and lost one of my side-whiskers. I couldn't utter a word and didn't do so during the whole performance. They thought I would gain courage as the piece progressed, but during the third act the orchestra came in with a few thrilling bars of music and I completely lost my head, and I dashed out of the theatre to find the depot and take the next train for Boston.

"As I entered the cars with make-up on, a black streak on my cheek from blackened eyebrows, and my wig at one side, passengers thought I was staring mad. On reaching home I rushed in to my mother, who thought I was going to be a second Booth, begging her not to send me on the stage again, but to get me a position in some store."

## CHAPTER XXI.

1878—1880.

CLOSE OF THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC—OPENING OF LOW'S OPERA HOUSE—MANY GOOD ATTRACTIONS IN THAT HOUSE—FIRST APPEARANCE HERE OF ANNIE PIXLEY—SKETCH OF MISS PIXLEY—FIRST PRODUCTION HERE OF "PINAFORE"—NINTH SEASON AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—FIRST PRODUCTION HERE OF THE "PIRATES OF PENZANCE"—SUCCESS OF ANNIE PIXLEY AND ALDRICH AND PARSLÖE AT LOW'S—BOSTON THEATRE COMPANY IN "FALSE SHAME"—FIRST APPEARANCE HERE OF SARAH BERNHARDT—SKETCH OF MISS BERNHARDT.

THE year 1878 witnessed the closing performances in the Academy of Music, and the opening of Low's Opera House. There were but two companies in the Academy, namely: January 16th, 17th, 18th, Centennial Jubilee Singers, and October 7th, 8th, 9th, Old Dominion Minstrels.

Low's Opera House opened on the evening of March 4, 1878. There was an address by Mayor Doyle and a concert by the American Band, with Dora Wiley and H. C. Barnabee as the soloists. The only entrance was at that time, and for two or three years later, on Union street.

Wilkinson's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Company came the second night, and then followed Bourne & Company's Female Minstrels, Colonel Ingersoll's lecture on "Hell," the Berger Family, Shook & Palmer's Company in "A Celebrated Case," the Hess English Opera Company, in "Chimes of Normandy," and "Fra Diavolo," with Emilie Mellville as the star, Milton Nobles in "The Phoenix," Mlle. Aimee's farewell to America, and Boston Museum Company, with all the favorites. This closed the spring season, and many alterations were made in the house, which were necessary to make it comfortable for theatrical representations.

The season of 1878-9 opened at this house September 23d, with the Rice Surprise Party, then an excellent organization.

Warde & Barrymore's "Diplomacy" Company followed, and, although the audiences were small, the company made a most favorable impression. Colonel Ingersoll followed to rather a small audience compared with those which have greeted him on his later visits. Fanny Davenport, then a new star, also appeared before a small audience. The Franklin Lyceum had their entertainments there that season, and among their attractions were the Berger Family, Theodore Tilton, Professor Churchill, Francis Murphy, the Barnabee Concert Company and Mrs. Scott Siddons. One of the most notable events of the season at Low's was the first appearance in Providence of Annie Pixley. She came on the 5th and 6th of November. The houses were good, but not very large. She returned on the 13th and 14th of December to much larger houses and more enthusiastic audiences. She was the talk of the town, and when she came back early the next season the house was none too large to hold her admirers. Another attraction at Low's which did good business and made a good impression, was the Tracy Titus Opera Company, with Laura Joyce, Catherine Lewis, the late Mose Fiske, Eugene Clarke, etc., in the cast.

Annie Pixley, *née* Shea, was born in Brooklyn, New York, about 1857. Her uncle was the Hon. George Shea, Judge of the Marine Court, New York. Her parents removed to San Francisco, where her father died. She went upon the stage at a very early age and soon made her mark as a star in the Golden Gate city. In 1876 she accepted an engagement in Australia, singing in comic opera successfully. In 1877 she returned to San Francisco, where she made a decided hit as *The Widow* in "The Danites," with McKee Rankin, and as *Gretchen* to Mr. Jefferson's *Rip Van Winkle*. She came East when "Pinafore" was the rage, and in Philadelphia was the original *Josephine*. About this time she made an arrangement with Bret Harte for his play, "M'liss," and as *The Child of the Sierras* she has achieved a world-wide reputation. In private life she is Mrs. Robert Fulford.

The Providence Opera House opened its eighth season September 2d, with George S. Knight, who was then a most popular star. The Jewish ladies gave a benefit at the Opera House, September 16th, for the yellow fever sufferers, and had a good house. John A. Stevens brought his "Un-

known " Company here that season and filled the house for a week. Lotta was also a great success that season. Steele Mackaye was here that season with his play of "Won at Last," with Blanche Meda as the star. Mary Anderson came November 11th, 12th and 13th, and all night long before the opening of the sale of seats there were one hundred or more in line waiting to be the first purchaser. The Police Association had a benefit November 14th, with the Laura Phillips Company, and the capacity of the house was tested. The Boston Museum Company came with "Pinafore," with Rose Temple as *Ralph Rackstraw*, and Marie Wainwright as *Josephine*, and it was liberally patronized. The Museum Company came later with "My Son," in which the late William Warren and the late Harry Crisp made the greatest hits of their experience with Providence audiences. Modjeska was a great success of that season, and so were the Philadelphia Church Choir, Tony Pastor, Lawrence Barrett, Frank Mayo, the Kellogg Opera *troupe*, Denman Thompson, Robson and Crane, the Butterflies' Ball, the Lilliputian Opera Company, Genevieve Ward, who played two engagements, and John Stetson's Company. A. M. Palmer's Company came for the last week in May, with the "Banker's Daughter," with J. H. Stoddart, Sara Jewett, Mat. Lingham, J. B. Polk, and other good artists in the cast. The first night the house was so poor that Mr. Palmer talked about taking his company back to New York by the midnight train, but he was persuaded to remain, and, before the week was over, the house had no vacant seats.

The ninth season at the Providence Opera House opened Sept. 22, 1879, with Gus Williams in his play of "The Senator." He was rather new in the legitimate business then, and his profits were not great. The Rice Surprise Party, which followed, had crowded houses, but then the bottom seemed to drop out of theatricals, and it was several weeks before another full house was seen. Even such favorites as Tony Pastor, F. S. Chanfrau, Maggie Mitchell, and Joseph Murphy, failed to draw more than ordinary audiences, and no one could give any good reason for it. Hoffman's "Pinafore" Company, which played on the 13th of November, was the second attraction of the season, which drew largely. Joseph Jefferson followed for two nights, and he met with equal suc-



cess. Robert L. Downing, who has since been a star, was then his leading man. There was not another full house until Lester Wallack came December 15th, although between these two stars were "The Tourists," "The Black Crook," and Robson and Crane. The Police Association had a great benefit December 18th, but John McCullough, who followed them, was not so successful. The Boston Theatre Company presented the play of "Drink," with Tom Keene, and it made a great sensation. Mary Anderson had as large audiences as the Opera House ever held on January 15th, 16th, and 17th. There was not an inch of vacant standing room in any part of the house, and the orchestra played from the stage during this engagement. From that date to the latter part of the season, except on very few occasions, the houses were very good and very often crowded. Among those who drew well were Frank Mayo, Mrs. Oates, Lawrence Barrett, the Strakosch Opera Company, Bartley Campbell's play of "Fairfax," Haverly's Minstrels, Daly's Company in "An Arabian Night," Fanny Davenport, B. Macauley, Denman Thompson, Colonel Ingersoll, "The Pirates of Penzance" Company (the original), with Signor Brocolini, Blanche Roosevelt, J. H. Ryley, Jesse Bond and other great artists; Lotta, J. T. Raymond, Daly's Company in "The Royal Middy," with Catherine Lewis as the *Middy*. Harrigan and Hart also played here that season, and as the city was crowded with strangers who had come to see the international boat race, they turned hundreds of people away. Their dates were the 16th and 17th of June. Among the visitors to the city were Charles R. Thorne, Jr., William H. Crane, Stuart Robson, Charles A. Stevenson, and a score or two of lesser lights in the profession, and they applauded the people on the stage as probably they were never applauded before or since.

At Low's Opera House that season the attractions were more numerous than almost any other season while the house was under his management, and the majority of them were very good. The opening night was September 5th, with Emerson's Megatherians, with good business. Barlow, Wilson, Primrose and West followed with equal success. Then came Annie Pixley to crowded houses. The weather was extremely hot, both gardens were running, the Park Garden still having

the realistic "Pinafore" on the lake, but in spite of this Miss Pixley did not get left. One of the principal events of the season at this house was the first production on any stage of the "Iron Will," the title of which was within a few weeks changed to "Hazel Kirke." Under the latter name it has been played in every city, town and village of any size in the United States. Aldrich and Parsloe with "My Partner," came for the first time that season and met with immediate favor. The Boston Ideal Opera Company were here three times, playing three fine engagements, the second time with "Fatinitza." The "Galley Slave" company, with Joseph Wheelock, Marie Prescott, Frank Evans, and others of note, was here and made a sensation. The Boston Theatre Company produced "False Shame" here for the first time on any stage. It died an early death. No less than six minstrel companies were at this house during the season, and most of them went away with a balance on the right side. The stars who have not been mentioned were Rose Lisle, Frank Bangs, D. E. Bandmann, Gus Phillips, Josh Hart, Victoria Loftus, Pat Rooney, Neil Burgess, Denman Thompson, Buffalo Bill, Minnie Palmer, W. J. Florence, J. B. Studley, and Maud Forrester.

The tenth season at the Providence Opera House opened with Colonel Ingersoll, August 20th. The crowded houses of the season were drawn by Joseph Jefferson, Maggie Mitchell, Haverly's "Coons," Robson and Crane, Tony Pastor and Lotta. Good houses witnessed Hermann, Jarrett's "Cinderella," the Strakosch and Hess Opera Company, Kate Claxton, Soldene, "Voyagers in Southern Seas," Neil Burgess, "Hazel Kirke," the Troubadours, the Tourists, the Criterion Comedy Company, Mrs. Scott-Siddons, the Ideal Opera Company, Frank Mayo, the Laurent-Corelli Company, Emma Abbott, Rice Surprise Party, De Wolf Hopper in "100 Wives," Boucicault, "Two Nights in Rome" Company, Denman Thompson, and Corinné. The very poor houses were drawn by the Norcross Company, Aberle's Minstrels, Annie Ward Tiffany, the Bijou Opera Company, Abbey's "Humpty Dumpty" Company, Ada Cavendish, the "Four Seasons," Studley's "Monte Cristo," Fred Paulding, Soldene, the "Legion of Honor," John Murray, "Dengremont," George S. Knight, Balabrega, and the New York Com-

edy Company in "Billee Taylor." The Narragansett Boat Club produced the "Pirates of Penzance" February 1st and 2d. It was an artistic success, but the profits were not large. Among the attractions that have not been mentioned were Mrs. Morgan's benefit, Dufur and Ross wrestling match, Stella Bellmore, Thayer's "Celebrated Case," "Sam'l of Posen," Daly's "First Families," Leavitt's Specialty Company, "Around the World," the "Jollities" company, Gill's "Goblins," with Francis Wilson and Emma Carson, William Chace's benefit, the Royal Mastodons, the Boston Museum Company, Anthony and Ellis's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Company, Callender's Minstrels, the Grayson-Norcross Company, and Maggie Weston. The season was not a very profitable one. Mr. George Hackett was then the manager.

The season of 1880-81 at Low's was one of the very poor ones for that house, also. In fact, the people did not come out that season to theatrical entertainments only on rare occasions. The house was opened September 24th, 25th, with the "Strategists," who were poorly patronized. Harry Miner's Company appeared 27th, to a fair house. Annie Pixley had overcrowded houses for a week, beginning October 11th. The Tile Club did fairly for the week of October 24th. The Boston Ideals had a good house November 17th. Minnie Palmer played to fair business November 18th, 19th, 20th. "My Partner" played to the capacity of the house November 24th to 27th. "Deacon Crankett" was fairly patronized December 13th, 14th, 15th. Mahn's Opera Company in "Boccaccio" gave splendid entertainments to meagre patronage. Crowded houses were drawn by the Police Association benefit, the Boston Museum Company, and the Union Square Theatre Company. The other attractions were the "Jollities" Company, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Company, Willie Edouin, Hickey's "Humpty Dumpty," Joseph Murphy, the "Galley Slave," Ford's Opera Company in "Olivette," Barlow, Wilson, Primrose and West's Minstrels, Gus Phillips, Jennie Yeamans in "Jack Sheppard," Pat Rooney, Sarah Bernhardt in "Camille," the "Banker's Daughter," Herrmann, Charles L. Davis, and Rice's "Billee Taylor."

The great event of the season was the first and only appearance up to the present time of Sarah Bernhardt. This talented actress is the daughter of a French lawyer and a

Dutch Jewess. She was entered as a pupil at the *Conservatoire*, Paris; admitted to the classes of Provost and Samson, and in 1861 gained the second prize in tragedy, which she followed up by the second prize in comedy. Signs of her genius were very early recognized by Auber. Her first appearance was by no means a success, and her second was even worse, so that she retired from the stage for a time. It was not until 1869 that her merits began to be recognized. Perhaps her first real triumph was in the character of the *Queen of Spain* in "Ruy Blas." It gained a warm tribute of praise from Victor Hugo, and has always been recognized as one of the greatest of her creations. In the Franco-German War she was a nurse during the siege of Paris. She made her second appearance at the *Comedie Française* in November, 1872, in "*Madame de Belle Isle*." This was followed by a number of great creations, until her rendering of the rôle of *Dona Sol* in "*Hernani*" stamped her as the greatest of living actresses. Her first visit to London was in 1879. In 1881 she toured in the United States. Madame Bernhardt is above all things a tragic actress, and conquers by sheer force of passion. She is her characters, and, though seldom aiming directly at studied effect, she can command at will an extraordinary variety of voice and gesture.

## CHAPTER XXII.

1881-1883.

ELEVENTH SEASON AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—SOME VERY BAD COMPANIES AND WORSE PLAYS—FRANK MAYO'S TWO WEEKS' ENGAGEMENT IN TRAGEDY—SKETCH OF MR. MAYO—EDWIN BOOTH AT LOW'S—ONLY APPEARANCE HERE OF ROSSI—OTHER GOOD STARS AT THIS HOUSE—TWELFTH SEASON AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—MLLE. THEO'S ONLY APPEARANCE HERE—A NAUGHTY SHOW—THE CONTINENTAL GUARDS—OSCAR WILDE—CHARLES WYNDHAM—MARGARET MATHER'S FIRST APPEARANCE—SKETCH OF MISS MATHER—SKETCH OF MLLE. RHEA.

THE eleventh season at the Providence Opera House was a long one, beginning the 23d of August, 1881, and closing the 14th of June, 1882. There were several attractions which had crowded houses, among them being Haverly's Minstrels, Leavitt's Giganteans, Baker and Far-ron, the Vokes Family, Lotta, "Michael Strogoff," Maggie Mitchell, Mary Anderson, Denman Thompson, and Tony Pastor, but the season was not a very profitable one, even at that. Mr. George Hackett was still the manager, and he was not a very energetic one. He had the reputation of booking almost any combination that would play on low percentage, and some of the attractions which played under his management were decidedly queer. Take, for instance, the "After the Opera" Company, the "Jolly Bachelors," the "Legaire" Company, the "Florinel" Company, the "Mrs. Partington" Company, the "All-at-Sea" Company, and the "Thro' the Rye" Company, all of which the theatre-goers had to endure that season. Fortunately there were not many patrons at those performances (they could not be called entertainments), and it is feared that a majority of the few who did go wondered over what crime they had committed that they should be made to suffer so. One of the

important features of the season was the two weeks' engagement of Frank Mayo in tragedy. He had long cherished a desire to escape from "Davy Crockett," the constant repetition of which had become nauseating to him, and he was anxious to show the people what he could do in such characters as *Macbeth*, *Richard*, *Richelieu*, etc. He spent several thousand dollars for costumes, armors, and other paraphernalia, and he devoted the entire summer to preparation for his new departure. He secured a very large and able company to support him, and he started in for a run of "Macbeth." The play was finely staged, all the appointments were complete, the original music was given by vocalists specially engaged, and altogether it was a production such as Providence had never seen before. It ran for one week, beginning September 12th, but the weather was hot, and many of those who would have been patrons had not yet returned to their city homes. Mr. Mayo was not, however, discouraged, but continued another week in the other characters spoken of. The result of the engagement was the loss of a few hundred dollars, and even at that he fared better in Providence than in other cities which he visited later. The general verdict of his patrons was that he enacted the tragic rôles very satisfactorily, but they preferred to see him in "Davy Crockett," just the same as the majority of theatre-goers prefer to see Joseph Jefferson in "Rip Van Winkle."

Mr. Frank Mayo was born in Boston, April 19, 1839, but made his first appearance on the stage at the American Theatre in San Francisco, under Laura Keene's management, in 1856, occupying every position from supernumerary to that of leading actor, and supporting almost every star that visited the Pacific slope from 1860 to 1865. He was never engaged for any line of business, but played old men, young men, middle-aged men, comedy, tragedy, black and white, as it happened. Having acquired in this way, an experience not otherwise possible, he left San Francisco in 1865, and became a stock star at the Boston Theatre, under the management of Jarrett, Tompkins & Thayer, opening August 28th of that year as *Badger*, in "The Streets of New York," a part in which the handsome actor made a hit, which he repeated in many other leading rôles. The following season he became a star, at first presenting the Shakespeare dramas, in-

terspersed with romantic plays of less dignity, but at length making a specialty of "The Streets of New York." In 1872 Mr. Mayo, while managing at Rochester, New York, first played *Davy Crockett*, with which his name is as closely associated as Jefferson's with *Rip Van Winkle*, or Maggie Mitchell's with *Fanchon*.

To resume: The stars of the season who have not been previously mentioned were John T. Raymond, F. S. Chanfrau, B. McAuley, James A. Herne, Fanny Davenport, Corinne, Genevieve Ward, Mrs. G. C. Howard, Rose Eytinge, Robson and Crane, W. H. Gillette, A. Kaufman, Miss Jeffreys Lewis, C. Murielle, Kate Claxton, George S. Knight, T. W. Keene, Tony Denier, Lawrence Barrett, John A. Stevens, Joseph Murphy, Gus Williams, Neil Burgess, Lizzie May Ulmer and Pearl Eytinge. Emma Abbott and her opera company gave the operas of "Martha," "Patience," "Chimes of Normandy," "Maritana" and "Romeo and Juliet." The Strakosch Opera Company gave "Faust," with Clara Louise Kellogg, and "Carmen," with Minnie Hauk, John Stetson's Opera Company gave "Patience," with Vernona Jarbeau in the title rôle. The Hanlons first brought out "Le Voyage en Suisse" that season, and had large but not crowded audiences. They came late in the season, beginning May 22d. Miss Jeffreys Lewis made an artistic but not a financial success in "Two Nights in Rome."

Low's Opera House had a remarkably bad opening that season with a *melange* called "Medical Students," written by Dr. Sweet, of Springfield, who ought to have been made to swallow some of the worst physic he ever administered before he ever gave such a dose to the public. This was followed by another abortion called "Mimics." Then came Robinson's "Humpty Dumpty," a great improvement over the others, but poor enough at that. Callender's Minstrels followed and gave a very good show. Frank Frayne came next, with poor success. Annie Pixley had crowded houses for the week beginning October 3d. The other crowded houses of the season were drawn by Neil Burgess, the Boston Museum "Patience" Company, Barry and Fay, Edwin Booth, the Boston Ideals, and Miss Ada Coombs. The two great events of the season were the appearance of Rossi on the 17th and 18th of October, and of Edwin Booth, January 3d and 4th. Both of

these distinguished artists attracted audiences of excellent quality, Mr. Booth, of course, having much the largest house. Boucicault, Joseph Jefferson, Janauschek, J. K. Emmet, and others also appeared at this house, were kindly received, and went away with a balance on the right side.

The theatrical season of 1882-83, which was the twelfth of the Providence Opera House, was one of the most important ones in the history of that house, as it was also in the history of Low's house. At the first-named house it brought Mr. James O'Neill for the first time as a star. It also brought for the first time here Mr. F. S. Chanfrau and wife together, Mlle. Theo, "Esmeralda," James E. Murdoch, Celia Logan, Ada Dyas, Margaret Mather, Mrs. Langtry, Mlle. Rhea, and it was further distinguished by the appearance of the Continental Guards, of New Orleans, who gave a series of pretty tableaux, which were much admired by military men.

At Low's the season first brought out here Mr. Oscar Wilde, who created a great sensation; Haverly's excellent "Merry War" Company, the "Squatter Sovereignty," from Harrigan's, which crowded the house for a week; the Equine Paradox of Bartholomew's, which made another great success; Rice's "Iolanthe," giving the first production of that opera in Providence and filling the house nightly; Stuart Cumberland, the mind reader, who was the talk of the town for his clever work; Charles Wyndham's celebrated comedy company, which also drew fashionable audiences; Etelka Borry, the Viennese star, and the Thalia Theatre Company, which gave three of the best entertainments ever witnessed in Providence, but which were not well patronized, principally on account of the hot weather.

With such a list of good attractions the season ought to have been a very profitable one, but it was not so. At the Providence Opera House, the crowded houses were drawn by the "Lights o' London" Company, Mme. Theo, Gus Williams, (who played for the benefit of the Police Association), Salvini, Thatcher, Primrose and West, Mary Anderson, and Tony Pastor. The fairly good houses were attracted by "Hearts of Oak," Lawrence Barrett, Lotta, Maggie Mitchell, Modjeska, "Esmeralda," Wallack's Company in the "Queen's Shilling," George S. Knight, Baker and Farron, the Boston Theatre "White Slave" Company, Thomas Keene, Ada Dyas, John



McCullough, the Hanlons, Robson and Crane, Margaret Mather, "Monte Cristo," Haverly's Minstrels, John T. Raymond, Joseph Murphy, and Mlle. Rhea.

"Alvin Joslin" opened the season August 28th, and it closed June 23d with Mason and Griffin. Mme. Theo gave the "Parfameuse" to much the largest and most fashionable audience of the season. It was a pretty "loud" performance for Providence, and many of the ladies present would have no doubt parted with a good sum if they could have escaped without too much notice. Mrs. Langtry gave three performances. She drew from the wealthy class of theatre-goers, but she was not considered much of an artist at that time. The smallest audience that ever assembled in the Opera House was at a lecture given by Mrs. Celia A. Logan on Sunday evening, December 3d, the receipts being but a trifle more than four dollars.

Some of the attractions of the season which have not been mentioned above, were the Strakosch Opera Company, with Letitia Fritch, Zelda Seguin, Montegriffo and others, in the operas of "Fatinitza" and the "Bohemian Girl;" the "World" Company, Doud Byron, Neil Burgess, Hague's Minstrels, who on that occasion first introduced to Providence the song of "We Never Speak as We Pass By;" the Troubadours, Spaulding Bell Ringers; "Youth" for ten nights by the Boston Theatre Company; "Hazel Kirke;" the Lingards; Barry and Fay, Herrmann, Joseph Proctor, McKee Rankin, Boston Theatre Company in "Free Pardon," Carrie Swain, Snyder and Grau "Iolanthe" Company, Charles Fostelle in "Mrs. Partington," "The Professor," Palmer and Ulmer's Company, Janauschek, Frank Frayne, John A. Stevens, Ada Gray, "Romany Rye," with Robert Mantell in the leading rôle, Pauline Markham, Lizzie May Ulmer and Joe Emmet.

Kate Claxton opened the season at Low's Opera House, September 16th, and it closed May 30th with the Thalia Theatre Company. The only crowded houses were drawn by Annie Pixley, the Boston Ideals, the Letter Carriers and the Equine Paradox. Those who did fairly well were B. McAuley, Mrs. Morgan, the Rentz-Santley Company, Tony Pastor, Baird's Minstrels, Tom Thumb Company, Arnold Post with "The Volunteers," Duprez and Benedict, "Sam'l o' Posen," Callender's Minstrels, Willie Edouin, the Kampa

Orchestra, the Brownson Lyceum with "Colleen Bawn," Aldrich and Parsloe, Nellie Everett in Spiritualism, Buffalo Bill, Pat Rooney, Barlow and Wilson, and the Norfolk Jubilee Singers.

As stated above this was Margaret Mather's first visit to Providence. Her maiden name was Margaret Finlayson. She was born in Tillbury, Canada, in 1860. She was prepared for the stage by Mr. George Edgar, of New York, and does great credit to her tutor. She possesses natural ability in a marked degree. About 1885 she was married to Mr. Haberkorn, formerly leader of the orchestra at the Union Square Theatre in New York.

Mlle. Rhea also came here for the first time that season. She was born in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, about 1848. Her father was a wealthy manufacturer, who died while she was still very young, and she resolved to prepare herself for the stage, for which she had a passionate love. In 1865 she was thrown in the way of Charles Fechter, then in the full tide of success, and he introduced her to Samson, the famous teacher of Rachel. She was admitted to the Paris *Conservatoire*, and placed under the renowned Beauvallet. For ten years she was a favorite in France, and in 1881 made her first appearance in Boston in the part of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, in the tragedy of the same name. Her most recent success is as the *Empress Josephine*. She is equally a favorite in England and America.

James O'Neill, who came here as a star that season, was born in Ireland, but came to this country when very young. He made his first appearance on the stage at the old National Theatre in Cincinnati. After playing a round of parts as juvenile man in that theatre he went with John Ford, of Baltimore, in 1868-69. After that he was leading man with John Ellsler, of Cleveland, O., where he supported all the travelling stars at that time, including Edwin Forrest, Joseph Jefferson, Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Adams, Mrs. Bowers, Maggie Mitchell, and many others. After the Chicago fire he was leading man at McVicker's Theatre, where he remained for two years, supporting Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, Adelaide Neilson, Wm. J. Florence, etc. From there he went to Hooley's Theatre, in Chicago, as leading man. The following year he went to California with a com-

pany from Hooley's Theatre, where he remained one year. He then joined A. M. Palmer's company at the Union Square Theatre in New York, to share the leading business with Charles R. Thorne, Jr., during which he played in all of the Union Square successes. Returning to San Francisco, under Mr. Palmer's management, to play in "A Celebrated Case," he remained there three months, when his engagement with A. M. Palmer came to an end. Mr. Palmer desired him to renew the engagement, but he preferred to take the position of stock star at the Baldwin Theatre, where he remained three years. It was during this engagement that he was called upon to impersonate *Our Saviour* in the "Passion Play," a translation from the German by Salmi Morse. The play ran for three weeks. A few months later he was engaged by Henry E. Abbey to play the same part at Booth's Theatre in New York. Mr. Abbey failed to produce the play, and Mr. O'Neill remained at the theatre as leading man for the rest of the season. The year following he starred in all of the principal cities in a play called the "American King" and "A Celebrated Case," returning to Booth's Theatre, under the management of John Stetson, where he played the part of *Edmond Dantes* in "Monte Cristo." He then travelled throughout the country for seven years in this same part, making a snug little fortune by it. In May, 1890, he produced Henry Irving's version of "The Dead Heart" at Hooley's Theatre in Chicago, playing it for an entire season, with the exception of the usual summer vacation. In May, 1891, he produced "The Envoy" at the Star Theatre in New York.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

1884—1886.

A POOR THEATRICAL SEASON—"YOUNG MRS. WINTHROP" AND "JALMA"—LAWRENCE BARRETT IN "FRANCESCA DI RIMINI"—ENGAGEMENT OF HENRY IRVING AT LOW'S—SKETCH OF MR. IRVING—LAST SEASON OF MR. HACKETT'S MANAGEMENT AT PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—DUFF'S OPERA COMPANY IN "A NIGHT IN VENICE"—JANISH, THE AUSTRIAN ACTRESS—SKETCH OF ROBERT B. MANTELL—ROBERT MORROW TAKES THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—THE "MIKADO" AND OTHER SUCCESSES—SKETCH OF THE VOKES FAMILY—SKETCH OF ROSE COGHLAN.

THE theatrical season of 1883-84, which was the thirteenth at the Providence Opera House, was one of the poorest, financially, that was probably ever known in Providence. There were sixty-one different attractions at the Providence, and forty-four at Low's, yet at the former only six of these attractions had crowded houses, and at the latter there were only three. A large majority of the attractions were of good quality, and some of them far above the standard. "Young Mrs. Winthrop" was first seen here that season, and so was "Jalma," with all its glittering armors, its grand staircase and elaborate scenery. This, in many respects, was the most complete spectacular play ever produced in Providence; but while it was the talk of the town, the audiences were never large enough to fill the house. It was the more surprising, because it had just had a very long and successful run in Boston, and, therefore, it could not be said that its merits were unknown to Providence people. Lawrence Barrett came here that year with his play of "Francesca di Rimini," then in its first season. On the opening night it rained in torrents, and the audience was so small that Mr. Barrett was quite discouraged. The second night the house was nearly full, and for the remainder of the week it was

crowded to its utmost capacity. Margaret Mather made her second visit that season and had crowded houses from the start. The other crowded houses of the season were drawn by James O'Neill in "Monte Cristo," Haverly's Minstrels, the Elks' benefit, and Barlow and Wilson's Minstrels. Fair houses were drawn by Barry and Fay, the "Siberia" Company, the "Black Flag," Kate Claxton, Roland Reed, the Boston Bijou Company in the opera of "Virginia," Stetson's "Pique" Company, Hearts of Oak, Maggie Mitchell, Janauschek, "Esmeralda," Brownson Lyceum, Stetson's "Confusion," Nat. Goodwin, Lizzie May Ulmer, Thomas Keene, Robinson and Crane, the Boston Museum Company in the "Celebrated Case," the Lucier Family, the "Bunch of Keys," John T. Raymond (who presented his new play "For Congress"), Baker and Farron, the "Devil's Auction," the Hanlons, Oliver Doud Byron, Salsbury's Troubadours, the "Rajah," the "Romany Rye," Joseph Murphy, Joseph Jefferson, and Hackett's benefit. There were some very bad "shows" that year at this house, such as "Yakee," with the Wymans in it, the "Flying Dutchman," "Carrick-a-Rede," written for D. J. Maguinness, the "Power of Money," "Uncle Sam," etc. All of these attracted very poor houses, the Wymans, especially, hardly getting a corporal's guard present in any night during the week. Of the others who were poorly patronized there were Topsy Venn, in "Furnished Rooms," Lizzie Harold, Daly and Derious, Gus Williams, Tony Denier, the Davene *troupe*, Sol. Smith Russell and Sully's "Corner Grocery." The season opened with "Ranch 10," August 27th, and was closed by Dan Sully May 24th.

Low's Opera House did not open that season until the 16th of September, when the American Band played to large audiences. The great event of the season was the engagement of Henry Irving, the nights of March 14th and 15th; the houses were large, but not crowded. His failure to bring Ellen Terry along probably lost him several hundred dollars on the engagement. Tony Pastor, Annie Pixley and the Equine Paradox were the only attractions that had crowded houses, but there were quite a number who did an average business, such as C. L. Davis, the Boston Ideals, "Her Atonement," the Duprez Minstrels, "7-20-8," "McSorley's Inflation," Dowling's "Nobody's Claim," Wm. J. Scanlan,

the Rentz-Santley Company, Rose Eytinge, Dr. Hutchinson, the Tourists, the Kernells, Wheatley and Trainor organization, the Howard Specialty Company, Buffalo Bill, Boucicault, Callender's Minstrels, Pat Rooney, the "Truth" Company, the play being almost identically the same as that which had been played the last week at the same house under the name of "The Wages of Sin." The latter is the original name, and the company which came here and played it under the name of "Truth" were nightly expecting an injunction from Maubury and Overton, who owned the original. Small audiences were drawn by such good artists as Mr. and Mrs. Chanfrau, the Boston Museum Company, Frank Mayo, John E. Owens, B. McAuley, and Aldrich and Parsloe. Many of the artists who played to poor business in Providence that season said they would never come here again, and some of them have kept their word.

Henry Irving was born in Keinton, near Glastonbury, England, Feb. 6, 1838. He was educated in London. His first appearance on the stage was at the Sunderland Theatre, in 1856. He then went to Edinburgh, where he remained for two years. In September, 1859, he appeared at the Princesses' Theatre, London, for a few months. In the following year he was "leading man" in Glasgow, afterwards becoming a member of the Theatre Royal, Manchester, where he remained until April, 1865. It was at this well-conducted establishment Mr. Irving may be said to have learned the technique of his art, as he played quite a hundred characters in all sorts of plays, besides supporting the various stars that visited the great manufacturing city. His salary at the Theatre Royal was less than £5 per week, and the work he did for this modest sum was enormous. From Manchester he went to Liverpool, and from Liverpool to London, where he came out at St. James's Theatre as *Doricourt* in the "Belle's Stratagem." He played several other characters at that theatre, and from that period he became identified with the portraiture of villainy in all its forms. Mr. Irving's *chef d'œuvre*, in the opinion of his greatest admirers, is undoubtedly *Mephistopheles*, which is a marvellous performance, and his *Louis the Eleventh* will long live in the memory as a powerful and highly finished stage performance. His visits

to America have rendered him as great a favorite here as he is in his native England.

The season of 1884-85, the fourteenth at the Providence Opera House, was the last of Mr. Hackett's management. It was not a very profitable one, although a majority of the attractions were better than for a season or two previous. The house was opened by the Redmund and Barry company in a "Midnight Marriage," and they had fairly good houses for the week. "Mugg's Landing" followed, but it didn't suit the popular taste, consequently vacant seats were abundant. The next attraction that followed was one of Archibald Clavering Gunter's peculiar plays, with the peculiar title of "D. A. M." It was not so bad a play as Gunter has sometimes written, but it was so bad that nobody wanted to see it twice. "Crimes of London" was the next, and, with one exception, it was the worst of the season. The exception was a hodge-podge called "P. Q., or a Night in the Sierras." It is safe to say that a night in the Sierras would not be so dreadful a sentence as to be compelled to listen to this play. The only crowded houses of the season were drawn by James O'Neill in "Monte Cristo," Thatcher, Primrose & West, Margaret Mather, Edwin Booth, and the author of this volume, whose benefit took place on Friday afternoon, March 20th. In addition to the plays already spoken of, which were produced that season, were the "Parlor Match," "Storm Beaten," "In the Ranks," "Pavements of Paris," "Adamless Eden," "Excelsior," "Twins," "Shadows of a Great City," "May Blossom," "Siberia" and "Fantasma." Among the stars who came that season were Minnie Maddern, Roland Reed, Eric Bayley, George S. Knight, Minnie Palmer, Sol Smith Russell, Robson and Crane, Lotta, Ristori, Baker and Farron, J. A. Stevens, T. W. Keene, J. K. Emmet, Murray and Murphy, Maggie Mitchell, Joseph Murphy and Jacques Kruger. Margaret Mather made two visits that season, doing a great business each time. Among the good things of that season were Duff's Opera Company in "A Night in Venice," and Kiralfy Brothers' "Excelsior."

Three attractions only drew crowded houses that season to Low's Opera House. These were "Adamless Eden," "Davene and Austin," and the Boston Ideals. The former was then new to Providence, and it came at a time when the City

Council Committee was inclined to be rather strict about the morality of entertainments. The house was crowded with males. Everybody expected to see a very "loud" show, judging by the pictorial printing that had been put upon the walls. Nothing out of order was given, however, and it was really so good that the company came to the Providence Opera House later in the season and played to good business for two nights. Mlle. Aimee came with her play of "Mam'zelle" for the first time that season, and played to large business, even against political torchlight parades. The same play has subsequently been given in the same house by Alice Harrison. "Orpheus and Eurydice" was another popular attraction of the season. Moore and Holmes's Burlesque Company made a good impression, but were none too well patronized. The "Seven Ravens," "Called Back," with Mantell, "Her Atonement," "Zozo, the Magic Queen," all came that season for the first time. Janish, the Austrian actress, tried hard to make herself popular, but failed to do so. On her second night she was the guest of the Ladies' Rhode Island Hospital Aid Association, at one of their receptions at the Narragansett Hotel. Among the other visitors to Low's that season were Tony Pastor, Fannie Osborne, Bennett and Moulton's Opera Company, the Leopolds, Neil Burgess, William Stafford and Evelyn Foster, Dominick Murray, George S. Knight, Harrison and Gourlay, William Carroll and the Southern Minstrels. Reeves's "Pinafore" Company gave three entertainments to three good houses.

Robert B. Mantell, who came that season in "Called Back," was born in Irvine, Ayreshire, Scotland, in 1854; was brought up in the city of Belfast, where he made his *début* as an amateur. His first appearance as a professional was in 1874, at Rochdale, in England, as the *Sergeant*, in "Arrah na Pogue." He afterwards played opposite characters to Miss Wallis, the English tragedienne, for about three years. His next engagement was in the United States as leading man in the "Romany Rye," the part in which he was first seen in this city. Subsequently he was leading man in Fanny Davenport's "Fedora" Company; next as a star in "Called Back" and "Tangled Lives;" then as "Monbars," and in 1889-90 in the "Corsican Brothers." He is now a citizen of the United States, and is likely to be a prominent figure in the dramatic world for years to come.



Mr. Robert Morrow succeeded George Hackett as the manager of the Providence Opera House, and although it was a new experience to him, he succeeded in greatly improving the list of attractions offered, and also in improving the appearance of the house, both before and behind the curtain. His first treasurer was Mr. A. H. Dexter, who was succeeded by Harry Wilson, and the latter by Harry Callender. Mlle. Rhea opened the season Sept. 21, 1885, and did a fair week's business, notwithstanding the weather was exceedingly hot. She presented nearly all the plays in her repertoire, and pleased the audiences. Redmund and Barry followed, but were not successful. Then came several attractions, including "Around the World," Daly's "Vacation" Company, "Clio," Effie Ellsler, Rosina Vokes and Maggie Mitchell, all appearing to excellent houses. Rosina Vokes came for the first time that season, unaccompanied by the other members of her family, and the people liked her immensely, especially in "My Milliner's Bill" and the "Private Rehearsal."

"The Vokes Family," so long known to the American stage, comprising Fawdon, Frederic M., Jessie, Victoria and Rosina Vokes, were born in London, and the four eldest made their appearance in America in 1868. They made a tremendous success here. Rosina, the youngest, with her infectious laugh and high spirits, was the favorite. She is still exceedingly popular in all parts of the country. She is the wife of Cecil Clay, formerly an attorney in London, but now her manager.

The "Mikado," with John Stetson's Company, also came for the first time that season, and the houses were so crowded for a week that a return date was made a few weeks after, and then still another. The last of the three engagements was with the No. 2 Company, but the opera was so pleasing to the people that the houses were still large. Mary Anderson also came that season, fresh from her first visit and great success in Europe, and the seats were all taken early. Her date was December 14th. Clara Morris made her first appearance for some years, January 29th, and there was only standing room, and not much of that. Margaret Mather, Thatcher, Primrose and West, Lawrence Barrett, the Hamlons, Fanny Davenport, Denman Thompson, Joseph Mur-

phy, and Robson and Crane had no reason to complain of their patronage, most of them having crowded houses. In contrast to this were Professor Cromwell (who couldn't draw enough to pay for the gas), Loudon McCormack, "Dark Days," (one of the best companies and best plays ever seen in this city), Lillian Lewis, Kate Castleton, Bella Moore, Ethel Tucker, the "Coronation of Columbus," the "Ivy Leaf," J. B. Polk and Tony Hart. All of these had poor business. The "Ratcatcher" was one of the attractions which had hard luck. The company was a large one and the houses were only fair. They were to go away on Saturday night, but the flood which came on Friday, Feb. 12, 1886, had broken up all railroad connection between Providence and Stonington, so that New York could not be reached. Finally on Sunday night the Stonington Steamboat Company sent one of their boats to Providence, and it took away this company, as well as numerous other delayed passengers.

Mr. Morrow tried a stock company for several weeks after the close of his regular season. It began May 18th, and continued until after the Fourth of July. The plays presented were the "Three Guardsmen," "Sea of Ice," "Lucretia Borgia," "Omnibus," "Under the Gaslight," "Two Orphans," "Man Without a Country," "Ingomar," and "My Awful Dad." The company met with fair success, and Mr. Morrow probably did not lose any money, while at the same time he had an experience which was of value to him.

Crowded houses were not very numerous at Low's Grand Opera House this season. The opening was excellent, however, with Thatcher, Primrose and West's Minstrels, September 4th and 5th. The large houses were drawn by the "Rag Baby" (with Marion Elmore in it); Rose Coghlan, who made her first appearance as a star; Kate Claxton, Annie Pixley, Professor Bristol's horses, Mlle. Aimee, George S. Knight, John W. Sayles, Dan Sully, the Boston Ideals, C. W. Coudock, the "Rajah," Lester and Allen, James O'Neill, Jack Ashton, "Young Mrs. Winthrop," and the "Mikado." One of the failures of that season was the Irish play, entitled "Denny Doon," written for Hugh Fay to star in, and backed by William Harris, of Boston. It had a short life.

Rose Coghlan, who first appeared as a star at this house, this season, was born in London about 1856. She is the

daughter of a Church of England clergyman, and, like her brother Charles, she received an excellent education. She made her *début* as one of the witches in "Macbeth," it is said, with very unsatisfactory results, because of an attack of stage fright. However, she became leading lady at the age of eighteen, and supported at the provincial theatres a number of the prominent stars. At Drury Lane she played the leading feminine rôles to Barry Sullivan's *Hamlet*, *Richard III.*, *Benedick*, and *Macbeth*.

In 1875 Miss Coghlan accompanied Mr. Sothern to America, where her career has been one grand triumph. She was at once recognized as an actress of rare ability, and as *Lady Teazle*, *Peg Woffington*, *Jocelyn*, etc., she has no superior on the American stage.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

1887-1889.

MR. MORROW'S SECOND SEASON—"THE LITTLE TYCOON," "RUDDYGORE" AND "THEODORA"—RICHARD MANSFIELD AND OTHER GOOD STARS—SKETCH OF JOSEPH HAWORTH—SKETCH OF FREDERIC B. WARDE—SKETCHES OF STUART ROBSON AND WM. H. CRANE—MR. B. F. KEITH SECURES THE LEASE OF LOW'S OPERA HOUSE—SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH SEASONS AT THE PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—FIRST APPEARANCE HERE OF JULIA MARLOWE—SKETCH OF MISS MARLOWE—SKETCH OF JOSEPH F. WHEELOCK.

THE sixteenth season at the Providence Opera House opened Sept. 6, 1886, and closed June 1, 1887. Fred-eric Warde, the vigorous young actor, opened it, and John L. Sullivan, the champion pugilist, closed it. That was before Sullivan had gone upon the stage as an actor. This was Mr. Morrow's second season, and his able management had become so well known to theatrical people that he was almost able to select his attractions just as he wanted them. Mr. Warde made a good opening—much better than was expected. Lewis Morrison followed with a version of "Faust," which was carefully and somewhat elaborately staged, and in which Mr. Morrison did some excellent acting.

The first great treat of the season was the production of the "Little Tycoon," by the original company, with Will S. Rising, Elma Delaro, Robert E. Graham and the others who became such prime favorites with the patrons. The week's business was very large, but it was exceeded by "Erminie," although it was difficult to tell which gave the best satisfaction. Another success in the operatic way was "Ruddy-gore," by John Stetson's grand company, with Helen Lamont, Alice Carle, George Frothingham, Brocolini, Phil Branson and others. "Ruddygore," it is said, was not such

a great success in other cities, but Providence people like a great many things that other communities do not like, and dislike a great many things that are liked elsewhere.

A dramatic production which created quite a sensation that year was "Theodora," with its wealth of scenery, its lions, etc. Poor Lillian Olcott, the heroine, has since passed away. She was not a first-class artist, but one could not resist admiration of her energy, her brave struggle to reach a lofty position, and her success in obtaining a play for which so many were bidding. Genevieve Ward's visit that season will not soon be forgotten. She was accompanied by W. H. Vernon, one of the most graceful actors that the local stage has ever seen.

Richard Mansfield made his first and only visit as a star. The business was light, but the artistic success was great. Robert Downing, Louis James and Frederic Bryton were three other new stars who came, although all of them had been seen here before in stock companies. Among the other attractions of more than ordinary interest were Viola Allen, James O'Neill, Denman Thompson, the "Mikado," "Evangeline," "Held by the Enemy," Barry and Fay, Marie Prescott, "Shadows of a Great City," Maggie Mitchell, J. B. Polk, Eben Plympton, Dion Boucicault in "The Jilt," (which was a grand success), Lawrence Barrett in "Rienzi," Margaret Mather, Effie Ellsler, Rose Coghlan, "Aphrodite," "Hoodman Blind," with Joseph Haworth and Sydney Armstrong, etc. There were forty-nine attractions, altogether, and among those not previously mentioned were "Michael Strogoff," "One of the Bravest," "Devil's Auction," "Our Heroes," "The Main Line," Duff's Opera Company, Tony Hart, "Peck's Bad Boy," "Tin Soldier," the "Ratcatcher," Fanny Davenport, "Saints and Sinners," Patti Rosa and Joseph Murphy.

Low's Grand Opera House had forty-five different attractions that season. Kate Claxton opened it Sept. 6, 1886, and Louise Arnott closed it July 4, 1887. The best attractions were Wilson Barrett, the American Opera Company, Modjeska, and the McCaull Opera Company. The only really crowded houses were drawn by Thatcher, Primrose and West's Minstrels and by the American Opera Company. Some of the other companies and stars were the "Banker's

Daughter," Pat Rooney, Henry Chanfrau, the Australian Novelty Company, Arthur Rehan's Company in "Nancy & Co.," the "Parlor Match," Frank Mayo, the Hungarian Gypsy Band, Haverly's Minstrels, "Called Back," Redmund and Barry, M. B. Curtis, "Hazel Kirke," Ada Gray, "Pinafore," by the Rhode Island Yacht Club, etc.

Joseph Haworth, who came that season, is a native of Providence. He was born here in 1859. At a youthful age his ambition to become an actor was encouraged by his *début* at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1874. He served a patient apprenticeship at John Ellsler's Theatre, Cleveland, till he received an offer from the Boston Museum, which he accepted, and remained there four years, when he was offered the position of leading man, but he aspired to high dramatic preferences. His ambition was gratified by an engagement with the late John McCullough, in whose support he was for two seasons, playing in such rôles as *Icilius* in "Virginius," *Cassius*, *Iago*, *Phasarius*, and in "Ingomar," with pronounced success. After Mr. McCullough's retirement, Mr. Haworth supported Mary Anderson, as *Romeo* to her *Juliet*. He has made many successes still more recently.

Frederic B. Ward was born at Oxford, England, 1851. He was educated for the bar, but came to America about 1866, where he immediately made a success on the stage. He has made successes in Forrest's rôles, *Ingomar*, *Richard III.*, *Damon*, *Virginius*, *Spartacus*, etc.

The seventeenth season at the Providence Opera House opened Aug. 22, 1887, with Sweatnam, Rice and Fagan's Minstrels, and closed with Joseph Murphy on the 12th of May, 1888. The opening was an excellent one, the house being crowded and the entertainment one of the best. Hoyt's "Hole in the Ground" followed, with only fair success. Ezra Kendall came next and was treated very poorly. Then came a perfect fiasco entitled "Circus in Town." Much was expected of it, as it had been approved by E. E. Rice and H. E. Dixey, who seldom make a mistake, and also from the names of the people engaged to appear in it. But it met with ignominious failure. As great a surprise on the other side was met with in the attraction which followed. It was the time worn "Streets of New York," with George C. Boniface as *Badger*, and it had four large houses. For the next four weeks the

Dalys, Annie Pixley, Denman Thompson, Rhea, and James O'Neill had full houses, and then came another great failure, that of the "Two Johns," which suited other parts of the country, but did not suit Providence. The next three attractions, which were "Shadows of a Great City," Frederick Bryton, and "Lights o' London," had good patronage, but Alice Harrison, who followed, was unlucky. Then came Redmund-Barry, Louis Aldrich, Clara Morris, Herrmann, "Erminie," Frederic Warde, E. H. Sothorn, Sweatnam, Rice and Fagan (their second visit), Gillette in a "Pink Pearl" and "Editha's Burglar," Lotta, Arthur Rehan's Company, the "Dark Secret," Rosina Vokes, Frank Daniels, Frankie Kemble, Minnie Palmer, the Parlor Match," Fanny Davenport, R. B. Mantell, Vernona Jarbeau, Duff's Opera Company, "She," the "Arabian Nights," all of which were well patronized. Such a list of good attractions following each other is seldom found, and ought to have made Manager Morrow rich and happy. Among the other attractions which came that season were "Lost in New York," the "Tin Soldier," "Held by the Enemy," Dockstader's Minstrels, "Hoodman Blind," with Frederick de Belleville in the leading rôle, Kate Claxton, Robson and Crane, Margaret Mather, the "Little Tycoon," the "Corsair," Maggie Mitchell, "Evangeline," and Joseph Murphy. Robson and Crane's engagement was played on the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th of March, during the great blizzard, and the last night was an extra one, because they couldn't get away, the railroad tracks being blocked with snowdrifts. The public was glad of it, and the stars were probably not very sorry, as their receipts were much larger than they had expected. They were then playing "The Henrietta."

This was the last appearance here of Robson and Crane as joint stars, and it is therefore appropriate that a sketch of each should be given here.

Stuart Robson was born in Annapolis, Maryland, March 4, 1836, in which ancient city, it is claimed, was given the first theatrical performance known in America. He was educated at St. John's College. Designed for the ministry, but preferring another style of acting, he made his first appearance on any stage at the Museum in Baltimore, Oct. 13, 1853, as the *Waiter* in "Heir-at-Law." First appeared in

New York, Sept. 3, 1863, at Laura Keene's Theatre. The three following seasons he was in Philadelphia. Then he went to Selwyn's Theatre, Boston, where he played *Bottom* in "Midsummer Night's Dream" for ten consecutive weeks.

It may be said of Mr. Robson that he has had more experience in legitimate comedy characters than any other comedian of the present generation, with the possible exception of Mr. Jefferson. His partnership with Mr. Crane continued for eleven years, and was dissolved in the spring of 1889.

William H. Crane was born in Leicester, Massachusetts, on the 30th of April, 1845, and was educated in Boston. At an early age he evinced decided musical and dramatic ability. In July, 1863, he joined the Holman Opera Company, composed of young people, and made his first appearance, July 13th, as the *Notary* in the "Daughter of the Regiment." He remained with this company for seven years. In 1870 he joined the Oates Opera company and remained with it for four years. In August, 1874, he went to Hooley's Theatre in Chicago, as first comedian, afterwards playing for a year in San Francisco, with the same company. Coming east in 1876, he met Mr. Robson, and they appeared jointly for the first time at the Park Theatre, New York, in Grover's comedy, "Our Boarding House." Mr. Crane created a genuine sensation by his wonderful imitation of the peculiarities of voice and manner of his partner, Mr. Robson, though physically totally dissimilar, in their grand production of the "Comedy of Errors." Later Mr. Crane attracted much critical attention by his masterly performance of the greatest of all of Shakspeare's comedy creations—*Sir John Falstaff*, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor."

The season was one of the best in the history of the Opera House.

Low's Opera House opened August 25th, with Gorman Brothers' Minstrels, who were quite successful. Augusta Van Doren followed with Morris's play, "Charlotte Russe," and met with a dismal failure. Then came "We, Us & Co.," J. K. Emmet, Jennie Calef, Keller, Henry Chanfrau, Thatcher, Primrose and West, Lillian Olcott, C. A. Gardiner, Monroe and Rice, J. C. Roach, in "Dan Darcy," C. T. Parsloe, J. F. Crossen, Hanlon's "Fantasma," Ada Gray, "Jim, the Penman," the Triple Alliance, Gilmore's Band, Sunday af-



ternoon and evening concert, the National Opera Company in "Faust" and "Tannhauser," Lily Clay Company, Arizona Joe, Night Owls, Modjeska, Reilly and Wood, T. W. Keene, the Troubadors, "Fantasma," "Hearts of Oak," Gorman's Minstrels, and "Le Voyage en Suisse." This was the last of Mr. Low's management, the closing night being May 3d.

The Theatre Comique was burned on the night of Friday, Feb. 17, 1888. The Lily Clay company was performing there and the female members lost very heavily of their wardrobe, although the jokers insisted that it was so scanty it couldn't have cost much. The company appeared before a crowded house at Low's on the night succeeding the fire. Many other attractions booked at the Comique, filled their time at Low's, but the Clay company was the only one that did well.

Mr. B. F. Keith had now secured the lease of Low's Grand Opera House for a term of years. He made some important alterations in it, and opened May 14th with the opera of "Girofle-Girofla" and a strong variety company in addition. He continued the season until the middle of July, presenting a change of opera each week, and adding such strong specialty artists as the Vaidis Sisters, Smith and Lord, the Bratz Brothers, the Viennese lady fencers and the Julians. The houses were invariably crowded.

The eighteenth season at the Providence Opera House continued for about thirty-eight weeks. It was one of the best seasons that had been known for several years, but it ought to have been still better with the excellent attractions which Manager Morrow presented. Very few theatres in the country have offered in a single season such a list as Rose Coghlan, Frederic Warde, James O'Neill, Henry E. Dixey, Duff's Opera Company, the Kellogg Opera Company, a "Possible Case" Company, "The Wife" Company, "Paul Kauvar" Company, Lotta, Harry Lacy, Cora Tanner, Julia Marlowe, Joseph Jefferson, "Jim, the Penman," Clara Morris, Annie Pixley, "Yeomen of the Guard," the "Ruddy-gore" Company, Margaret Mather, Rosina Vokes, N. C. Goodwin, Booth and Barrett, Maggie Mitchell and Mrs. Langtry.

The preliminary season opened August 10th, with Johnson and Slavin's Minstrels, an excellent company, which did a good business for two nights, considering the extreme heat. The "Two Sisters" came for a week, beginning August 27th. The play was almost new at that time and was very crude. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," with the great cast, began a week's engagement September 3d. The company died here. Stetson's Opera Company, in "Ruddygore," had good business the week of September 10th, and pleased the people. "A Dark Secret" played the week of September 17th to excellent business. "A Parlor Match" had good houses September 24th, 25th, 26th. The Howard Specialty Company filled out the balance of the week, and, although it was the best company of the kind that ever visited Providence, the patronage was only fair. The "Stowaway" put in a week, beginning October 1st, to fair business. Rose Coghlan, in her pretty play of "Jocelyn," came October 8th, 9th and 10th, and had first-class audiences and full houses. "Shadows of a Great City," October 11th, 12th and 13th, had only fair business. Frederic Warde was fairly treated October 15th, 16th and 17th. James O'Neill, in "Monte Cristo," played to good houses the balance of that week. Henry E. Dixey played for a week, beginning November 5th, to crowded houses and at raised prices. "Siberia," for the week of October 29th, did well, notwithstanding it was the week before the Presidential election. "A Possible Case" did well the week beginning November 5th, and deserved it. Duff's Opera Company, not of as good material as in its former visits, did only fairly well November 12th, 13th and 14th. The Kellogg Opera Company, which was no better, followed November 15th, 16th and 17th, and the business was no better. The Lyceum Theatre Company, in "The Wife," came for the week beginning November 19th. No other company has pleased the people better, and the houses were very large, especially toward the end of the week. "Paul Kauvar," the following week, did not suffer. December 3d, 4th and 5th Thatcher, Primrose and West had large business. Lotta followed for three nights to good business. Cora Tanner came with her play of "Fascination," December 10th, 11th and 12th. Dore Davidson, with "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," December 13th, 14th and 15th, gave the poorest show

of the season, and had the poorest houses. December 13th, Julia Marlowe, a decidedly pleasing and promising young star, began a week's engagement, and although it was the week before Christmas, her fame attracted good audiences.

Julia Marlowe was born in Cumberland, England, and was brought to America when only six years of age. She studied for about three years under the care of Miss Ada Dow, a former member of the Providence Opera House Stock Company. She played soubrettes in a travelling company for about one year. She is now (1891) in the twentieth year of her age, and it is predicted that she has a great future before her.

Harry Lacy, with his "Still Alarm," played for the week beginning December 24th to some of the largest houses of the season. December 31st. January 1st and 2d, Joseph Jefferson looked out upon crowded houses. "Jim, the Penman," was well patronized January 3d, 4th and 5th, and the Hanlons, with their "Fantasma," played to good houses for the week of January 7th. Clara Morris was fairly patronized January 14th, 15th and 16th. Dockstader's Minstrels had good houses January 17th, 18th and 19th. The "Paymaster" was lightly attended the week of January 21st. Annie Pixley had her usual crowded houses for the week beginning January 28th. "The Yeomen of the Guard" did well for a week beginning February 4th, and the "Twelve Temptations," which came the following week, also had good houses. Margaret Mather, of course, did a large business the week of February 18th. Rosina Vokes also proved that she was a favorite February 25th, 26th and 27th. N. C. Goodwin was well treated February 28th, March 1st and 2d. The "Corsair" and "Evangeline" Company had good houses the week of March 4th. "Zozo" and the "Streets of New York" came the following week, and both had light houses. The engagement of Booth and Barrett, the week of March 18th, was the great event of the season. The fashionable people turned out in very large numbers and the houses were crowded. The Cleveland-Haverly Minstrels had fair patronage March 25th, 26th and 27th. The house had to be closed the following three nights on account of the illness of W. J. Scanlan. Rice's "Pearl of Pekin" attracted good houses the week of April 1st, and Maggie Mitchell had fair audiences the following week. Dixey returned April

15th, 16th and 17th, and had good houses, despite its being Holy Week. Mrs. Langtry followed, and to the surprise of most people, her audiences were very large, that of the second night crowding the house. Harry Lee, with his "Chevalier," did wretched business the week of April 22d. "Sweet Lavender" made fair profits April 29th, May 1st and 2d, and "Le Voyage en Suisse" also did well the balance of the week. Joseph Murphy, the week of May 6th, had fair audiences, and Lydia Thompson had poor houses May 13th, 14th and 15th.

The name of Low's Grand Opera House had now been changed to Keith's Gaiety Opera House, and many other changes had also been made there. Mr. Keith opened his second season there with Corinne, September 10th. Crowded houses every night greeted the little lyric star, and would have continued another week, probably, if the engagement could have been extended. Mr. Keith made a rule that every attraction should play one week at his house, and up to the present time it has never been broken. The attractions which played there this season were as follows: Corinne, Neil Burgess, "Kindergarten," "Monte Cristo," Mrs. Rankin in the "Golden Giant," Dan Mason, in "Over the Garden Wall," Henry Chanfrau, "Passion's Slave," "Romany Rye," George C. Boniface, Jennie Calef, J. B. Polk, "We, Us & Co.," the "Rag Pickers's Daughter," "Soap Bubble," Fanny Louise Buckingham, "Mam'zelle," with Alice Harrison, "Beacon Lights," "Wages of Sin," "My Partner," the Kimball Opera Company, "Hoodman Blind," Edwin F. Mayo, "Nobody's Claim," "Zitha," Frank I. Frayne, C. T. Ellis, N. S. Wood, Redmund and Barry, "True Irish Hearts," "Lights o' London," "Hazel Kirke," "Queen's Evidence," John A. Stevens in "Unknown," "One of the Finest," Oliver Byron, McKee Rankin in the "Runaway Wife," "May Blossom," with Joseph Wheelock in the principal rôle.

Joseph F. Wheelock, an actor of the highest merit, was born about 1838. He began his theatrical career at the Boston Museum in 1855. He was for two years the leading man at Booth's Theatre, New York. For three years (1885 to 1887) he played the leading parts to Mrs. D. P. Bowers in her star engagements. He is a splendid elocutionist, a scholar and a gentleman.

## CHAPTER XXV.

1890-1891.

"LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY"—APPEARANCE OF BOOTH AND MODJESKA—SKETCH OF MODJESKA—SKETCH OF TOMMASO SALVINI—JEFFERSON AND FLORENCE COMBINATION—SKETCH OF JOSEPH JEFFERSON—SKETCH OF WILLIAM J. FLORENCE—SEASON OF 1890-91—A GOOD YEAR AT BOTH HOUSES—KEITH'S GAIETY OPERA HOUSE—BROWN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT THE THEATRE.

THERE were fifty-four different attractions at the Providence Opera House during the season of 1889-90, and most of them were very good ones. Still, the business was not up to the previous year. The preliminary season began August 19th and 20th, with Gorman's Minstrels, who had fair houses. "Jim, the Penman," came September 5th, 6th and 7th, with about the same patronage. The "Dark Secret" played for a week beginning September 9th, to very poor houses. "A Possible Case," 16th, 17th, 18th, had but little better success; "A Hole in the Ground," 19th, 20th, 21st, about the same; "Little Lord Fauntleroy," for a week beginning 23d, had full houses; the "Two Sisters," September 30th, October 1st and 2d, very poor patronage; Maggie Mitchell, October 3d, 4th, 5th, but little better; October 7th, for one week, "The Wife," to good houses; 14th, 15th, 16th, "Monte Cristo," fair business; 17th, 18th, 19th, "Captain Swift," about the same; 21st, for one week, "Nadje" and "Erminie," to large business; October 30th, 31st, November 1st and 2d, E. H. Sothorn in "Lord Chumley" and "Highest Bidder," to full houses; November 11th, for one week, Annie Pixley, with her usual success; November 18th and 20th, Salvini, to full houses; November 19th, the Salvini company, with young Salvini, to very poor house; 21st, 22d, 23d, Primrose and West's Minstrels, full houses; 25th, for one week, Rose Coghlan, in "Jocelyn,"

"Peg Woffington," "Forget-Me-Not," and "London Assurance," to good business; December 2d, one week, the "Exiles," very small audiences; 9th, 10th, 11th, "Bells of Haslemere," the same; 12th, 13th, 14th, "Fantasma," good business; 16th, one week, Carleton Opera Company in the "Brigands" and "Nanon," light business, but excellent entertainments; 23d, one week, R. B. Mantell in "Corsican Brothers," to good houses; 30th, one week, Adam Forepaugh, Jr., to wretched business; January 6th, Booth and Modjeska, in "Shylock," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Richelieu," "Much Ado about Nothing," "Fool's Revenge," and "Donna Diana," full houses; 13th, 14th, 15th, Duff Opera Company in "Paola," good patronage; 16th, 17th, 18th, Victoria Vokes, very poor business; 20th, one week, "Little Lord Fauntleroy," fair business; January 27th, one week, "Twelve Temptations," to fair houses; February 3d, 4th, 5th, Thomas W. Keene in "Richelieu," "Louis XI." and "Richard III.," good business; 6th, 7th, 8th, Rosina Vokes, the same; 10th, one week, "A Still Alarm," very large patronage; 17th, 18th, 19th, "The Burglar," poor houses; 20th, 21st, 22d, W. J. Scanlan, good business; 24th, one week, "Hands Across the Sea," first night for Elks' benefit, good houses; March 3d, "The Great Metropolis," the same; 10th, 11th, 12th, Barry and Fay, the same; 13th, 14th, 15th, "A Midnight Bell," full houses; 17th, one week, "Kajanka," fair business; 24th, 25th, 26th, "Brass Monkey," full houses; 27th, 28th, 29th, "Corsair," fair business; 31st, one week, Stetson's "Gondoliers," to fair houses; April 7th, one week, Margaret Mather, only fair houses; 14th, 15th, 16th, Fanny Davenport, large patronage; 17th, 18th, 19th, Jefferson and Florence in the "Rivals" and "Heir-at-Law," with crowded houses; 23d, Brown University Minstrels, the same; 24th, 25th, 26th, Joseph Murphy, the same; 28th, 29th, 30th, Emma Abbott in "Ernani," "Trovatore," "Bohemian Girl," and "Rose of Castile," to good houses; May 1st, 2d, 3d, Mary Shaw, in "A Drop of Poison;" 5th, one week, Frank Mayo, in "Nordeck" and "Davy Crockett," light houses; 15th, 16th, 17th, Herrmann, to crowded houses; May 30th, "Hazel Kirke," to good business.

One of the great events of the season was the appearance of Booth and Modjeska. Mr. Booth was then in ex-

cellent health and it seemed to be the general opinion that he never appeared to better advantage in this city.

Helena Modjeska (born about 1843), Polish actress, a native of Cracow, married her guardian, M. Modjeska, at the age of seventeen, and, in 1868, three years after his death, married a second time—M. Chlapowski, a Polish patriot and journalist. Having become celebrated as a player in amateur theatricals, she began to practice acting as a profession in 1862, starting with a travelling company. In 1868 she appeared before a Warsaw audience in a version of "Adrienne Lecouvreur," and at once became a popular favorite. Driven from Poland by professional jealousy, in 1876 she emigrated to America with her husband, and tried farming in California without pecuniary success. She accordingly determined to return to the stage, and, having learned English, appeared as *Adrienne* before a San Francisco audience in August, 1877. Her success was immediate. She won a fine reputation as an emotional actress and then went abroad, appearing in London and other cities. Since her return she has visited nearly every city in the country and is everywhere recognized as a superior artiste.

Salvini's appearance was also quite an event of the season. Tommaso Salvini was born at Milan, Jan. 1, 1830. His father was an able actor, and his mother a popular actress. When quite a boy he showed a rare talent for acting, and before he was thirteen years old he had already won a kind of renown in juvenile characters. At fifteen he lost both his parents, and the bereavement so preyed upon his spirits that he was obliged to abandon his career for two years. When he again emerged from retirement he joined the Ristori *troupe*, and shared with that great actress many a triumph. In 1849 he entered the army, and fought valiantly, receiving in recognition of his services several medals of honor. He went upon the stage again after the war, and soon achieved great success. He visited America in 1874, again in 1884-85, and again in 1889-90.

Still another event of much more than ordinary importance was the appearance of the Jefferson-Florence Combination, which, as stated above, had crowded houses at largely increased prices.

Joseph Jefferson was born in Philadelphia, Feb. 20, 1829.

He is descended of an old theatrical family, his grandfather, Joseph Jefferson, comedian, having been a special favorite in Philadelphia early in this century. Mr. Jefferson's father was a scenic artist, afterwards a manager, and then an actor. The present Mr. Jefferson very early entered the dramatic profession in the United States, and earned distinction in a great variety of comic parts, ranging from *Bob Acres*, in the higher range of English comedy, to *Caleb Plummer* in the domestic drama of more recent years. When only three years old he appeared on the stage as Rolla's child. He had a pretty hard struggle up to 1849, when he entered into partnership with John Ellsler and took a company over the southern circuit. From 1852 to 1856 he was in Baltimore; then he went to Laura Keene's Theatre in New York, playing several characters very acceptably, but his first great hit was in "Our American Cousin," in which he enacted the part of *Asa Trenchard*. In 1860 he first began playing his inimitable impersonation of *Rip Van Winkle*, from a play founded on Washington Irving's story by Charles Burke. During the civil war he went to Australia and returned home by the way of England, playing the part of *Rip* in London in 1865, achieving a triumphant success. He has visited England once or twice since, winning additional fame each time. For the past two or three years Mr. Jefferson has united with Mr. Wm. J. Florence, and the Jefferson-Florence combination has been one of the very best paying attractions in the country.

William J. Florence was born in Albany July 26, 1831. His father died in 1846, and William being the eldest of a family of eight children, was called upon for unusual exertion. He first tried newspaper work, and then a New York counting-house, but having a taste for theatricals, and becoming a member of the Murdock Dramatic Association of that city, drifted upon the stage and began his theatrical experience at the Richmond Theatre in 1849. December 6th of the same year he made his New York *début*. The next year he was in Providence and played *Macduff* here to the *Macbeth* of Booth. Soon afterwards he took to Irish characters at Brougham's Theatre, New York, and perfected himself as a dialect actor. On New Year's day, 1853, he married Mrs. Littell, a danseuse, whose maiden name was Pray, and who is a sister of Mrs. Barney Williams. Williams and his wife were now in the height of



their success as Irish boy and Yankee girl delineators, and Mr. and Mrs. Florence, believing the world was wide enough for another "team" of that kind, decided to adopt the same line, an experiment which proved eminently successful, but the rivalry was sharp and not always good-natured. They began their starring tour on the 13th of June, 1853. In 1856, they went to England, where more success awaited them. Florence was the first to bring out the "Ticket of Leave Man" in this country, and has played the part of *Robert Brierly* many hundred times. That and *Captain Cuttle* were his favorite characters for many years. His *Hon. Bardwell Slope* in "The Mighty Dollar," is remembered with much pleasure by Providence theatre-goers.

Keith's Gaiety Opera House had forty different attractions for the season of 1889-90, each one remaining one week, except the last, Alexander Salvini, who remained two weeks. Twenty-three of these attractions had crowded houses, and all of the others had very large audiences. The season began September 9th and ended June 28th. The list of attractions was as follows: Corinne in "Arcadia;" "Held by the Enemy;" N. S. Wood; "Shadows of a Great City;" Charles Erin Verner in "Shamus O'Brien;" the Vaidis Sisters Company; the "Blue and Gray;" "In the Ranks;" "Tourists in a Pullman Palace Car;" "Equine Paradox;" "One of the Bravest;" John A. Stevens; "Bandit King;" Rich and Harris Specialty Company; Mason Mitchell in "The Fugitive;" "A Royal Pass;" Daniel Sully; Hallen and Hart, in "Later On;" "A Legal Wreck;" "Under the Lash;" "Nobody's Claim;" "Harbor Lights;" "After Dark;" "Passion's Slave;" Daniel Sully again, Richard Golden in "Old Jed Prouty;" Nelson's "World Combination;" "Beacon Lights;" "Lights and Shadows;" J. H. Wallick in "Sam Houston;" the "White Slave;" "Lost in New York;" "Spider and Fly;" "Daniel Boone;" "The Fakir;" Vernona Jarbeau in "Starlight;" Boston Theatre Company in "Mankind;" "She;" A. Salvini in "Child of Naples," and "Three Guardsmen."

Most of these stars had been seen at higher-priced houses in the city, and were quite familiar to the general theatre-goers. There is, therefore, barely any other way to explain the crowded houses they received than by the supposition that the

ranks of patrons were largely increased from the class who had hitherto felt that they could not go to the theatre.

The season of 1890-91 began very encouragingly at the Providence Opera House, with Gillette's entertaining play, "All the Comforts of Home." The "Brass Monkey" followed to excellent houses, and then came "Mr. Barnes, of New York," to crowded houses, which was a surprise to everybody. "Raglan's Way," with Edwin Arden as the star, had beggarly houses, although it pleased all who saw it. "A Straight Tip," with J. T. Powers, brought back good houses again. Maggie Mitchell had a week of fair business. "Aunt Jack" was witnessed by large audiences. Herrmann attracted full houses, but Lotta, who followed, failed to draw with "Ina" and "Musette." The Casino Company, in "Mme. Angot," did not draw well. George Thatcher's minstrels met with great financial success. "Shenandoah" had crowded houses for one week. John L. Sullivan made his first appearance here as an actor, and was greeted by full houses. "Hands Across the Sea" played to good business. Evans and Hoey, in "A Parlor Match," had crowded houses. Margaret Mather succeeded almost as well as usual. Mlle. Rhea, in "Josephine," was both a financial and artistic success. Cleveland's Consolidated Minstrels were liberally patronized. The Howard Specialty Company, Hanlon's "Superba" and "Money Mad," all suffered by light houses. Messrs. Booth and Barrett, for one week beginning December 15th, had large houses and delighted audiences. "A Dark Secret" had light attendance, but "A Trip to Chinatown" had much better success. Then came Annie Ward Tiffany, in the "Step Daughter," which was financially a failure. "Mr. Barnes, of New York" returned, and again attracted full houses. Pauline Hall, in "Erminie" and "Amorita," took away large profits. The "Soudan" had crowded houses for one week. "Mr. Potter of Texas" came to see if "Mr. Barnes, of New York" had taken away all the money here, but found that there was an abundance left. Dixey, in "Adonis" and the "Seven Ages" played to crowded houses for one week. "Yon Yonson" was greeted with good houses for three nights. "A Midnight Bell" played to crowded houses for three nights, the first being for the benefit of the Theatrical Mechanics. Barry and Fay, without Fay (who was

ill) had fair audiences. The "Twelve Temptations" had poor houses. Russell's "City Directory" had large audiences, but the "Pearl of Pekin," which followed, was not a success. Cleveland's Minstrels did a large business, and "The Charity Ball" had to put out the "standing room" sign. The "Still Alarm" was not so well patronized as in former years. "Ship Ahoy," even though it came in Holy Week, met with good success. Annie Pixley played one week to good houses. One night was for the benefit of the Elks. Primrose and West's Minstrels had fine business. Agnes Huntington, in "Paul Jones," delighted full houses. The "Clemenceau Case" had a full house the opening night of its week's engagement, but hardly a corporal's guard after that. "Poor Jonathan," by the Casino Company, was liberally patronized. The "Prince and Pauper," with Elsie Leslie, did fairly. E. H. Sothern, in "The Maister of Woodbarrow," had crowded houses. The Talma Club occupied the house for one night, and presented "She Stoops to Conquer" to a good house. The Brown University Minstrels had three large nights. A week of opera carnival, for the benefit of the Rhode Island Homœopathic Hospital, was only fairly patronized. Stetson's "Hornet's Nest" did poor business, and a "Fair Rebel," for the benefit of some military companies, did not meet with success.

The season at Keith's Gaiety Opera House continued thirty-nine weeks. It opened September 15th with "My Jack," which, notwithstanding the hot weather, had crowded houses. September 22d, Donnelly and Girard came with "Natural Gas," and had equally good success. The bright soubrette of the company, Katie Hart, died suddenly in New York a few weeks later. September 29th, the Vaidis Sisters put in a week of large business, although not as crowded as their predecessors. Henshaw and Ten Broeck, with the "Nabobs," had the week of October 6th, with large houses. The "Bottom of the Sea," October 13th, the "Spider and the Fly," October 20th, and the "Blue and the Gray," October 27th, had only fair business comparatively. Kate Claxton, with the oft-repeated play of the "Two Orphans," had crowded houses the week of November 3d. Bobby Gaylor, in the "Irish Arab," November 10th, and "Woman Against Woman," November 17th, had only fair houses. Then came

Hallen and Hart, with "Later On," to such tremendous business that an extra matinée was given the day following Thanksgiving, and even that was crowded to the doors. Hardie-Von Leer came December 1st, to fair houses; Wills and Jerome, in "Two Old Cronies," December 8th, to the same; "Inshavogue," December 15th, about as good; December 22d, "Limited Mail" had fine houses; December 29th, Katie Emmett in "Waifs of New York," to large houses; the "Great Metropolis," January 5th, and "One of the Bravest," January 12th, met with the same success. Charles Erin Verner, in "Shamus O'Brien," had only fair houses the week of January 19th, but Monroe and Rice the following week, in "My Aunt Bridget," looked upon packed houses. February 2d, "Paul Kauvar" was played to a good business. Henry Aveling, the leading man, committed suicide a few weeks later at the Sturtevant House in New York. "After Dark," February 9th, attracted large houses, and so did "Master and Man," February 16th. "The Fakir," with Mark Sullivan, had successful business, and so did Ullie Akerstrom, March 2d. "Lost in New York" was welcomed by crowded houses the week of March 9th, and it was difficult to find even standing room the week following, when "Old Jed Prouty" occupied the stage. "The Hustler," with Dan Mason, John Kernell, and other popular people in the cast, also had crowded houses the week of March 23d. Fair business greeted Reilly and Wood's great show week of March 30th. "Siberia," April 6th; Frank Daniels in "Little Puck," April 13th; "Jim, the Penman," April 20th; J. H. Wallick, April 27th; Nellie McHenry, May 4th; McKee Rankin in the "Kanuck," May 11th; Minnie Oscar Gray, May 18th; "The Burglar," May 25th; "The World," June 1st; and Edwin Arden, in "The Eagle's Nest," June 8th, completed the list. The house was managed in a commendable manner by Mr. P. F. Connell, Mr. Keith's local representative.

On one of the evenings of the Hallen and Hart engagement, a large number of Brown University students attended, and applauded the young ladies in the company enthusiastically. They also frequently interrupted the performance with a round or two of their peculiar cheers, but everything passed off pleasantly, and everybody enjoyed the additional entertainment which the college boys furnished.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

REMINISCENCES OF THE PROVIDENCE OPERA HOUSE—LEADING MEMBERS OF THE FIRST STOCK COMPANY—MESSRS. BURROUGHS, TILTON, BASCOMB, SHELDON, RAINSFORD AND DONALDSON, AND MISSES CAMERON, MONK, HARRIS, ETC.—TERMS OF MR. HENDERSON'S LEASE—CASTS OF TWO SUCCESSFUL PLAYS.

THE great interest manifested in theatrical matters just preceding the opening of the Providence Opera House, and during its first season, has never been so prominent since, and probably never will be in Providence again, unless the conditions should be similar. For many years the city had been without a good theatre, and it had never had one so thoroughly equipped in every particular as the Providence Opera House was. Then, too, there had been no stock company here for several years. Travelling companies came and went, as they do now, but the fact of having the players residents of the city, and meeting them almost daily, made it very interesting to hundreds of people. Night after night until the season was far advanced, the theatre was crowded, and at the matinées late comers were indeed fortunate if they could obtain entrance. At the Athenæum, it was said, there was an immense falling off in the Saturday afternoon applicants for books that season, and the librarian attributed it to the fact that the young ladies had become so enthusiastic over the theatre performances that they had lost their interest in books apparently.

The members of Mr. Henderson's first stock company were ladies and gentlemen who generally conducted themselves in a praiseworthy manner, and made many warm friends. Miss Isadore Cameron, the leading lady, was rather reserved, especially among strangers, but in the few families she visited during her residence here, she was always welcome. She was tall and stately, not handsome, but so pleasing in her manner,

and withal so capable an artist, that she was exceedingly popular with the patrons of the house. This was particularly shown by the following incident. Mrs. Henderson, wife of the manager, played a star engagement about the middle of the season, and some busybody circulated a report that Miss Cameron was to be dismissed and Mrs. Henderson was to take her place in the company. Much dissatisfaction was expressed, not because Mrs. Henderson was disliked, but because the patrons were so pleased with Miss Cameron that they did not want her to go, and especially to have her forced out of a position. On the first night that Miss Cameron reappeared, she had a most enthusiastic reception, and the stage was almost literally covered with the flowers which were either thrown to her by the audience, or handed up by the leader of the orchestra.

Miss Cameron, although a resident of New York, was that season engaged in Chicago, but the great Chicago fire destroyed the theatre where she was playing, and so Mr. Henderson was able to secure her services. She was married to Mr. James F. Fuller, of New York, a few months after she came here, became the mother of two or three children, and died five or six years ago. Her sister, Victoria, also joined the company before the season finished.

Miss Ada Monk, the soubrette, was a general favorite both on and off the stage, and was received in some of the best families of the city. She was engaged before the end of the first season to be married to a wealthy and highly respected citizen, but the engagement was broken off at the last moment. She subsequently married a widower to whom she had been engaged some years before. She was considered a handsome woman, and was certainly a very pleasant lady and a good artiste. For several years, now, she has been an invalid at her home in New York city, a martyr to rheumatism. For many months she was in the hospital, but did not find much relief there. After she left Providence she travelled for a season or two with C. H. Furbish's "Led Astray" Company, then joined the "Strategists" Company, and finally became a member of Fanny Davenport's Company, in which she met with much success during the long run of "Fedora" at the Fourteenth Street Theatre in New York, and also in several other cities. That was the last of her professional career.

Nellie Morant Bowen was a sister of the popular actress, Fanny Morant. She was fairly good as an actress, but much more talented as a vocalist.

Anita Harris, another member of this company, was and still is, a resident of Providence. She became a favorite soon after the season opened by her excellent personation of the blind girl in "Dot, or, the Cricket on the Hearth."

Isabella Preston, the "old lady" of the company, won good opinions from all of the patrons of the house, because she was thoroughly competent for any part which was given to her. She is still on the stage.

Mr. E. L. Tilton, the stage manager, was an experienced actor, having supported all of the great stars of his time. He was also congenial and made hosts of friends, who were always glad to see him in his subsequent visits to Providence. His last appearance here was with Louis James's Company, in December, 1886. He died a few months afterwards in Birmingham, Ala. He was born in Framingham, Mass., in 1824, and had been on the stage since he was twenty years old.

William F. Burroughs, the leading man, was an excellent reader, and in a majority of the many characters in which he appeared that first season was very successful. His *Eliot Gray* in "Rosedale" was quite as good, the public thought, as that of Mr. Lester Wallack's; and his *Badger* in the "Streets of New York," could not be excelled. He was married to Miss Anita Harris while here, but she has since obtained a divorce from him.

William P. Sheldon, the comedian, was one of the most popular of the entire company, as was shown by the overcrowded house at his benefit near the end of the season. He remained two or three seasons, and was a favorite with many to the end.

H. L. Bascomb was a good general actor, and, until he became dissipated, was a general favorite. He "dressed" his parts with excellent taste, and in gentlemanly rôles he was thoroughly at home. One of his failings was his inability to take flattery for what it was worth. Too many friends and too much flattery led him into dissipation and brought out his many eccentricities. At one time he became almost in-

sane on the subject of religion, and would pray loud and fervently in the most unseemly places. One evening in particular, he went direct from one of his scenes on the stage to the green-room, and falling on his knees made an earnest prayer for forgiveness for himself and those around him.

A few years after he left Providence he undertook, one bitter cold night, to walk from New York to Hartford, and his legs and feet were so badly frozen that it was found necessary to amputate them. He is now in the Forrest Home for Invalid Actors at Philadelphia.

Mr. Milton Rainsford and W. H. Donaldson were the "old men" of the company. The former was a very conscientious actor and worked very hard to please the people, with a good measure of success. He passed most of his time at home, when not engaged at the theatre, and met very few people; still he was very companionable with those whom he liked. He was in the same Chicago theatre that Miss Cameron was at the beginning of that season, and the great fire also enabled Mr. Henderson to obtain his services.

Mr. Donaldson was also a good actor and a man of much intelligence. His health was not by any means perfect, and he was therefore not seen much outside of the theatre.

One member of the company, whose name I will not mention, made such a ridiculous figure upon the stage, that he was laughed at almost every time he appeared. Some of the leading stockholders were very much displeased with him and they asked Mr. Henderson to dismiss him. The latter said he had engaged him by contract for the full season and that he could not afford to let him go. Thereupon one of the stockholders offered to pay the salary, and I believe he did pay it, upon condition that the man should not appear upon the Opera House stage again during the season. Mr. Henderson did not dismiss him altogether, but employed him to do something else besides acting. The gentleman has since become a good actor, and has held many important positions in first-class theatres.

Mr. Henderson appeared here only once as an actor. Upon that occasion he took a benefit and personated *Ingomar* to the *Parthenia* of Mrs. Henderson.

Mr. Henderson leased the Opera House building for ten years. He was to pay seven per cent. interest upon the



mortgage of seventy-five thousand dollars, the taxes and insurance, and eight per cent. upon the capital invested for the first five years. The second five years the terms were to be the same with the exception that Mr. Henderson was to pay ten per cent. on the capital. This made a very good thing for the stockholders, and was at first also good for the lessee. His rent amounted to about \$17,500, and he received back for the rent of the stores in the building about \$3,000. When Mr. Henderson took the lease the Spragues were in the full tide of success, and all kinds of business in Providence was generally prosperous. After the Sprague failure, which took place a year or two succeeding the opening of the Opera House, there was a remarkable change for the worse, and theatrical business suffered materially.

Mr. Henderson was strictly an honest man, but his business methods might have been improved. Although generally considered very shrewd, he was often very careless, and those who ought to know, have often said that he trusted some of his employes far too much, and was so careless about retaining receipts, etc., that he frequently paid bills at least twice. Some of his intimate friends would often call his attention to the fact that certain of his employes were living in a most extravagant manner. He would cordially thank the informer, intimate that he had already become satisfied that it was the truth, promise to look into it at once, and there the matter ended. When he began to lose money, he also began to cheapen his companies, and economize in the wrong place. This led to great dissatisfaction among the stockholders as well as to the public, and finally he became anxious to give up his lease.

Mr. F. S. Brownell proposed to him that if he would give up his stock in the Opera House, which then amounted to \$12,000, the other stockholders would doubtless release him; he readily accepted the proposition, and the stockholders did as agreed upon.

Mr. Henderson went to New York, took a lease of the Standard Theatre, which he managed for several years, and for two or three years before his death, he was manager of the Academy of Music in Jersey City.

When Mr. Henderson left, the stockholders took the house in charge and leased it to travelling combinations. It is said

that their profits in this venture amounted to \$14,000 the first year. Finally, Mr. George Hackett took the lease, and during the five years that he was the manager the public saw many queer "shows," and the stockholders realized very little on their property. The last year, it is said, he did not pay one cent for rent, and the house was permitted to run down so much that when Mr. Morrow succeeded him, in 1885, about nine thousand dollars had to be spent in making the necessary repairs. The stockholders have received no dividends since 1882, but there is a good prospect that one will soon be paid.

Going back to Mr. Henderson's management, it is quite certain that the most popular play ever produced by any of his stock companies was "Rosedale," which was first brought out on the evening of Jan. 8, 1872, and had a run of three consecutive weeks, and was put on again later in the season. The cast of characters was as follows :

Elliot Grey,	W. F. Burroughs.
Matthew Leigh,	H. L. Bascomb.
Col. Cavendish May,	W. A. Donaldson.
Bunberry Kobb,	W. P. Sheldon.
Sir Arthur May,	<i>La Petite</i> Hattie.
Siles McKenna,	E. L. Tilton.
Farmer Greene,	Mr. Pierson.
Corporal Daw,	J. M. Allison.
Romany Rob,	W. C. Raymond.
Docrey,	W. H. Partello.
Robert,	S. Phileo.
Florence May,	Miss Isadore Cameron.
Rosa Leigh,	Miss Ada Monk.
Lady Adela Gray,	Miss Minnie Doyle.
Tabitha Stark,	Miss Isabella Preston.
Sarah Sikes,	Miss Anita Harris.
Primrose,	Miss Nellie Mabel.
Mother Mix,	Miss Naomie.

The next play, in point of interest, presented by any of Mr. Henderson's companies, was the "Two Orphans," first produced on Feb. 8, 1875. Mr. Henderson spent more

money upon this play than upon any other during his management, and it was generally conceded that the production was fully as enjoyable here as the original at the Union Square Theatre in New York. The cast of characters was as follows :

Chevalier Maurice de Vaudrey,	W. F. Burroughs.
Count de Linieres . . . . .	H. B. Norman.
Picard, . . . . .	Sid Smith.
Jacques Frochard, . . . . .	W. Treville.
Pierre Frochard, . . . . .	J. C. Padgett.
Marquis de Presles, . . . . .	F. G. Potter.
Lafleur, . . . . .	Harry Harwood.
Doctor, . . . . .	Mr. Raymond.
Martin, . . . . .	Mr. Williams.
Officer of the Guard, . . . . .	Mr. Edwards.
Chief Clerk in the Ministry of Police, . . . . .	Mr. Sutton.
De Mailly, . . . . .	Mr. Morrison.
D'Estrees, . . . . .	Mr. Jones.
Antoine, . . . . .	Mr. Deering.
Footman, . . . . .	Mr. Thompson.
Countess Diane de Linieres, . . . . .	Miss Lillie Wilkinson.
Louise, } The Two Orphans, {	Miss Lizzie Mahon.
Henriette, }	Miss Emmie Wilmot.
Marianne, an outcast, . . . . .	Miss Belle Bailey.
La Frochard, . . . . .	Miss C. A. Pennoyer.
Sister Genevieve, . . . . .	Miss H. Willis.
Julie, . . . . .	Miss Carrie Leclair.
Florette, . . . . .	Miss Hastings.
Cora, . . . . .	Miss Waterman.
Sister Therese, . . . . .	Miss Browning.

This play ran for two weeks at first and was frequently revived later in the season.

Of the above-named, Mr. Burroughs is occasionally heard of in and about New York; Messrs. Norman and Smith have both passed away; Mr. Treville's whereabouts are unknown; Mr. Padgett is a member of W. H. Crane's company; Mr. Potter has for some years been a manager of

prominent stars ; Mr. Harwood has become a very popular character actor ; Miss Lillie Wilkinson is in Worcester, and not long ago managed a theatre there ; Miss Emmie Wilmot is said to be teaching elocution in California ; Miss Lizzie Mahon has been here within a few years as leading lady of Crossen's "Banker's Daughter" Company, and Mrs. M. A. Pennoyer is still upon the stage, playing good *rôles* with her accustomed success.

Of the twenty-eight original stockholders of the Providence Opera House Association, sixteen have passed away up to the date of this writing, Aug. 10, 1891. Their names are as follows : Henry Lippitt, William Henderson, William S. Slater, Earl P. Mason, Henry Fairbrother, Henry J. Steere, John Carter Brown, Amos Beckwith, James Eddy, Martin C. Stokes, Alfred Anthony, William Butler, John T. Mauran, Alfred Read, B. F. Thurston, Edmund Davis. Of the original building committee, Mr. Francis S. Brownell is the only survivor.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

NOTABLE AMATEUR ORGANIZATIONS—PROVIDENCE DRAMATIC SOCIETY—AMATEUR DRAMATIC CLUB—HAMMER AND TONGS SOCIETY—DAVENPORT DRAMATIC CLUB—THE TALMA CLUB—THEATRE COMIQUE—WESTMINSTER MUSEE—PROVIDENCE MUSEUM—SANS SOUCI GARDEN—PARK GARDEN—CONCLUSION.

ONE of the most celebrated of the local amateur associations of which there is record was the Providence Dramatic Society, whose opening performance took place April 8, 1859, in a hall on Weybosset street, opposite the Post Office. The plays performed were "Sent to the Tower" and "No. 1, 'Round the Corner," and these pieces had been selected because they required no female performers. No ladies were ever on the list of active members of the Society, as it was feared that as volunteers they could not be depended upon for punctuality. Consequently, several ladies of excellent character and possessed of some previous stage experience were engaged, and they justified all the Society's expectations, for during a service of four years they never missed a rehearsal or a performance, and were always tastefully attired and "letter perfect" in their parts. These ladies were Miss Mary Morse, Miss Amanda Morse, and Miss Francis, afterwards Mrs. Fiske. When the exigencies of the cast required an additional lady, Miss Louisa Morse rendered valuable assistance. On one occasion (Sept. 26, 1859,) Miss Jean Margaret Davenport, now the widow of General Lander, personated *Laura Leeson* in "Time Tries All," Mrs. Albert Dailey playing *Fanny Fact*.

The most noteworthy performance of the Society during its first year was "Richelieu," the title rôle being sustained by James G. Markland, a prominent lawyer. This play was performed four consecutive evenings in May, 1859. During this year twenty-five performances were given.

At the expiration of the year's lease the Society moved into the Infantry Armory Hall, on Meeting street, which they had turned into a pretty theatre. The scenery was excellent in quality, some of the scenes being presents from liberal friends of the Society, and the act drop, representing the city of Rome, with the castle of St. Angelo in the foreground and the Church of St. Peter in the distance,—a fine work of art by Ernest Barton,—was always admired by the spectators. The initial performance, consisting of "Dreams of Delusion" and "The Two Buzzards," took place April 11, 1860. During the year twenty-four performances were given.

During the third year of the Society's existence there were only sixteen performances. The War of the Rebellion broke out in the spring of 1861 and absorbed public attention, and the Society voted in May not to play again until the end of the war. The war, however, did not end as soon as was expected, and plays were again put upon the stage. On the 26th of November, 1861, Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Davenport played the "Morning Call" and read several selected pieces for the benefit of the Society.

During the fourth year, as many of the active members had left the city, some to enter the military service of the United States, and others to change their residence, it was impossible to produce plays as well as was desirable. Hence there were only four performances, the last one occurring Feb. 5, 1863, when the bill was "The Weathercock" and "Slasher and Crasher." Soon afterwards the Society disbanded, and the scenery was sold to parties in Boston.

The organization was supported partly by a tax on its active members and partly by a yearly payment from each of its subscribing members, who, with their families, were alone admitted to the performance, a privilege much coveted. The principal performers were James G. Markland, leading old man; John Howe, comedian and stage manager; William J. Clarke, tragedian; Walter Manton, comedian; George Sydney, eccentric comedian; Charles Blake, comedian; George H. Ware, A. V. D'Costa, Samuel N. Woodruff, J. H. Allen, Frederick Anthony, George Anthony, Frank Knowles, William B. Dennis, Thomas A. Randall, E. K. Godfrey, John G. Hazard, and James H. Bugbee; but there were others who

occasionally rendered assistance. Three of the active members, viz., Messrs. Howe, Markland, and Sydney, had been professional actors, and two others became such. Mr. Carlo Mauran, whose stage name was Harry Bloodgood, was one of the latter.

About fourteen years ago the Amateur Dramatic Club, that had found previous accommodations in Union and then in Barney's Hall, took possession of Dramatic Hall, on South Main street. The building was formerly a church, then a morgue, then a livery stable and hack office, and then a riding school. After laying out \$4,000 or \$5,000 upon it they opened it as a club theatre and society gathering place. For five or six seasons they were eminently successful, and then the "green-eyed monster, jealousy," coöperated with some one who managed to get the accounts into very complicated condition, and the club died out. Friday, Jan. 7, 1877, this club opened their new theatre with the three-act play, "Apple Blossoms," with the following cast: *Mr. Penryn*, Arthur L. Brown; *Tom Penryn*, his son, W. S. Daboll; *Bob Prout*, Jeffrey Davis; *Mr. Temple*, John F. Tobey; *The Great Baggs*, a showman, H. B. Bowen; *Handsome Bill*, Rathbone Gardner; *Town Crier*, Clinton Mauran; *Jennie, Kitty*, and *Mrs. Page*, by Misses Minnie Hitchcock, Balch, and Neef.

The club met with much encouragement. Nearly all their plays were privately produced to audiences consisting solely of subscribers and invited guests. They gave many pleasant entertainments, yet it always was left to be wished that they had cast their plays more upon the professional lines of special ability in the performers for their parts, than for the purely social standpoint that they considered first of all.

Several other standard plays were produced that season, and prominent among the casts besides those already mentioned were Messrs. S. W. Nickerson, Matthew Watson, William G. Nightingale, Elisha Dyer, Jr., S. C. Blodget, Jr., H. F. Lippitt, Miss Emily Jones, Miss Mary Simmons, Mrs. Frederick Grinnell and Miss E. D. Potter.

Important plays of the second season were "School," with Augustus S. Miller as *Beau Farintosh*, A. S. Nickerson as *Jack Poyntz*, S. W. Nickerson as *Lord Beaufoy*, E. Philip Mason as *Dr. Sutcliffe*, and "Our Boys," with F. B. Greene as *Middlewick*.

Among other performances of the third year were "Take That Girl Away," "Who Killed Cock Robin?" and "Weak Woman;" and the fourth season, which opened with a concert, saw Howard Hoppin's operatta, "Oleo-Margarine," and "Papa Perichon," "She Stoops to Conquer," L'Homme Blazé," and a "Tangled Skein," with A. D. Payne as *Sir Reginald Houghton*.

In the season of 1881-82, was given "A Lesson in Love," and the following year "Woodcock's Little Game," and "Ours."

The Hammer and Tongs Society of Brown University was in its glory in those days, and every season they gave several performances of burlesques with much merit and success. Several times they essayed minstrel shows that are well remembered, and in whose lists we may find the names of many of the present leading professional and business men of this city. Kate Field appeared at Dramatic Hall in January, 1881.

Dramatic clubs without number and some almost without present record have had their rise and fall within the last decade.

The Davenport Dramatic Club gave "Time and the Hour" at Dramatic Hall, and the Haskins Dramatic Club have appeared at infrequent intervals. "The Eccentrics" played "Caste" in 1877, with John O. Darling as *Old Eccles*. Four or five years later the Union Dramatic Club gave "Nick of the Woods," with Mark Clemence as the *Jibbenainosay*.

Many more have had their hour to "strut upon the stage and then have been seen no more." It was left for the Talma Club to take up the work that the Amateur Dramatic Club put down, and to do more than any club in this city (with perhaps one exception), has ever been able to accomplish. This club was really the outgrowth of some entertainments given in the Providence Opera House in the winter of 1886, under the auspices of the Boating Association of Brown University, called "Grand Historical, Chronological and Allegorical Dramatic Pageant of the Coronation of Columbus." It was named after the great French actor of the Comedie Française, who was the first to strive after that perfection and realism of effect, and naturalness in small parts as well as the leading ones, and for harmonious and appropriate surround-



ings of costume and scene. This club secured Dramatic Hall, and, after a good deal of hard work, gave its first performance there on Feb. 15, 1886, which was very successful. Several other performances followed that season, many of them in other parts of the state.

The second season of the club was more brilliant than the first, and the high standard that they had set they seemed to more than sustain. Strong plays, like "Helping Hands" and "Our Boys," were given, the latter several times at home and once in the theatre at Pawtucket.

The beginning of the third year witnessed a sudden jump in the membership from about thirty-five to one hundred and thirty-five. Several hundred dollars were expended in improvements. Mr. W. A. Brownell and Mr. James Hill, who had been president and secretary respectively, had been succeeded by Hiram Kendall and Daniel Webster, Jr., during the previous season. Shortly after this, Mr. Hill, who had been pleased with his taste of theatrical life, sold out his business in America and returned to his native country, England, where he has since become a well-known theatrical manager, and has written several successful comediettas. He is at present associated with the English playwright and actor, J. B. Mulholland, in the management of the Theatre Royal, Nottingham.

This year "Esmeralda," "King Rene's Daughter," "Our Boys," etc., were produced in an admirable manner.

The fourth season witnessed many accessions of new talent, and one or two important productions. The club's twenty-seventh performance, which opened it, was given on November 14th, and consisted of "To Oblige Benson," and "A Cup of Tea," which was admirably played by a cast which included Miss Gilbreth as *Lady Clara*, Albert G. Carpenter as *Scroggins*, and James B. Ryder as *Sir Charles*.

The most elaborate of all their performances this season was the production of "She Stoops to Conquer." Miss Annie M. Gilbreth appeared as *Miss Hardcastle*, and Mr. Henry A. Barker as *Tony*. Mrs. W. W. Flint played *Mrs. Hardcastle*, Mr. Farnsworth was *Mr. Hardcastle*, Messrs. Ryder and Weeden were the two young gentlemen, *Marlowe* and *Hastings*, Mr. Kranz was *Diggory*, Mr. Meader was *Sir Charles Marlowe*, Miss Lewis was *Constance Neville*, and all the minor parts were unusually well taken care of.

The plays of the fifth season, 1890-91, were much more numerous than those of any preceding one. From October 16th, when they opened in "Home," until April 30th, when the season closed with a repetition of "She Stoops to Conquer" at the Providence Opera House, new plays were given in rapid succession, and raised the number of productions on their list from forty to about sixty.

For the fiftieth performance the club revived "Esmeralda," in a way more elegant than before, and with all the original cast, which included Miss F. E. Mosher, Francis Pratt, Mrs. W. W. Flint, George Packard, Daniel Webster, Jr., Henry A. Barker, Miss L. Edith Lilley, Miss Ella Stafford, Robert L. Barker and Hiram Kendall.

The Talma Club is now an incorporated society. It is well organized, under a strong constitution, with a board of twelve general managers, who in turn elect an executive committee, consisting of the president, Hiram Kendall; the secretary, Arthur P. Weeden; the treasurer, James B. Ryder, and the assistant secretary and treasurer, Wm. H. Wing.

The vice president and general manager is Mr. Henry A. Barker, who has filled that position since the club started. He has designed and painted all the scenes, and generally all the movements of the players, and besides this has enacted a wide range of important parts with success. The assistant stage manager is Mr. A. G. Kranz, who is a character actor of marked ability.

The Theatre Comique opened in November, 1874. Archie Stalker was the first manager. Then John D. Hopkins and Mr. James Tinker became the managers. Following them were Messrs. Robert Morrow and J. D. Hopkins. It made a great deal of money while this firm had it, the profits being about \$22,000 in one season alone. Mr. Morrow sold out in 1885 to Hopkins & Magee, and took the management of the Providence Opera House, where he has since continued. The Comique was totally destroyed by fire Feb. 17, 1887. Upon its site now stands the Swarts building.

The Sans Souci Garden, located near the foot of Broadway, was first opened as a concert garden in June, 1878. After a few weeks specialty performers were engaged. The second season, 1879, "Pinafore" was produced for quite a "run," and then the "Chimes of Normandy." The third

season, the opera of "Contrabandista" had a brief run, and then came "Fatinitza," which attracted crowded houses for three months or more. For four or five years following, comic opera was given almost exclusively, and then dramatic entertainments were successfully given. Among the dramatic and lyric stars and companies which have appeared there, are Henry Chanfrau, the Boston Theatre Company, Murray and Murphy, Tellula Evans, "Rice's Surprise Party," "Three Wives to One Husband," Corinne Opera Company, Mlle. Lucette, Jennie Calef, Lizzie Evans, Louise Pomroy, the Redmund-Barry Company, Harry Lacy, Louise Litta, Ben Maginley, Gracie Emmet, Dan Mason, Boston Opera Company, Lottie Church, Edmund Collier, Braham Comedy Company, Marland Clarke, E. P. Sullivan, Pat. Rooney, Charles Bowser, Rufus Scott, etc. The Redmund-Barry Company played an engagement of eight weeks there in 1886, to almost continued crowded houses.

The Park Garden, under the management of Messrs. Shirley and Reeves, was located on Broad street, near the South Providence horse car barn. It comprised twenty acres of land, enclosed by 41,820 feet of high board fence. It was opened June 24, 1878, by a "feast of lanterns," under the auspices of the Irrepressible Society. The first season was devoted to a display of fireworks on the lake, with scenery illustrating the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and destruction of Pompeii. Performances of various kinds were given there, but the principal event was the most realistic production ever given in this country of Gilbert and Sullivan's celebrated opera of "Pinafore." The garden was especially adapted for such a performance. It had a natural lake 360 feet long and 150 feet wide, enclosed in a natural amphitheatre, and upon the banks an audience of four or five thousand people was frequently assembled. A ship rigged like a man-of-war, the deck of which was 110 feet in length, was built in the centre of the lake, and upon its deck the opera was sung every night (Sundays excepted) for thirteen weeks, by a company of about one hundred, accompanied by an orchestra of twenty-eight pieces. Among the realistic features was the manner in which *Little Buttercup*, the *Admiral*, and *Hebe*, and the *Sisters*, *Cousins* and *Aunts* boarded the ship at each performance. Three boats were used for this purpose. The

first was rowed by *Buttercup* herself, the second and third by regular men-of-war men from the government vessel, *Blake*, which was stationed here that summer. These real sailors went "aloft" as soon as they reached the deck of *H. M. S. Pinafore*, and remained there until after the *Admiral's* opening song. The original cast of "*Pinafore*" at the Garden was as follows: *Josephine*, Signora Marie Baratta Morgan; *Buttercup*, Ada Byron Coombs; *Hebe*, Fannie Corey; *Admiral*, George W. Wilson; *Captain*, William S. Daboll; *Ralph Rackstraw*, Charles H. Drew; *Dick Deadeye*, Stanley Felch; *Boatswain*, W. J. Cushing.

The following season the Chinese opera of "Ambassador's Daughter" was also produced here in a most realistic manner, and "*Pinafore*" was also tried again for a few weeks. The garden was likewise celebrated for some of the most interesting walking matches that have ever been held in New England. All of the celebrated pedestrians in the country, including Weston, appeared here, and contested for liberal purses.

The Garden was closed in 1883, the land having been leased for five years. The last two years' performances were given in the Pavilion by various combinations of players.

Among the notable entertainments should be mentioned the very fine displays of fireworks, which were in many cases decidedly original, and were manufactured on the grounds. The Grand Army of the Republic were encamped there for five days, one season, and a notable feature was a very realistic sham battle.

The Westminster Musée was opened March 8, 1886, by Charles F. Handy & Co. Variety entertainments were given upon its stage, while in adjoining halls were exhibitions of "freaks," etc. For two or three years it was an exceedingly profitable house, and Mr. Handy retired with a snug little fortune at the end of that time. Since then it has had various managers, and they have tried almost everything to restore its popularity, but without much success.

Another place of amusement is the Providence Museum, now managed by Dr. Lothrop, of Boston. Mr. Handy was also connected with that in its early career, and it was quite popular. Mr. B. F. Keith, now the manager of Keith's Gaiety Opera House, began his managerial career in Provi-

dence as the manager of that house, with Mr. E. F. Albee as the local manager. While he was there business was always equal to the capacity of the house, and the audiences were so much pleased with the manner in which the house was conducted, that there was general rejoicing when it was learned that Mr. Keith had secured the lease of Low's Grand Opera House.

Dr. Lothrop has, since he succeeded Mr. Keith, made the house very popular by giving his patrons standard drama, with good companies at low prices. He has obtained adjoining property, and will doubtless enlarge the theatre another season.

The history of the Providence stage is now complete up to the present date. The writer has endeavored to make it correct and as concise as possible, and he hopes that his work will meet with general approval. Providence, twenty-five years ago had the reputation of being one of the best show towns in America, but the illiberality of a few managers who tried hard to make the public accept miserable performances and pay high prices for them soon resulted in destroying the confidence of the theatrically inclined, and managers of good attractions suffered so much from it that many of them would not visit Providence at all. The Frohmans, Daniel and Charles, were among the first who began to get a reward for bringing first-class companies and first-class plays to Providence, and now, almost anything with their names as managers, is liberally patronized here, and probably will be while they keep their reputation up to the present standard. Mr. J. M. Hill's companies have also been very acceptable, and so have the companies sent by Mr. John Stetson and from the Casino in New York. Mr. Palmer and Mr. Daly long ago crossed Providence from their list, although, if they should send their companies here now with some of their latest successes, they would doubtless find the visits remunerative.



## APPENDIX A.\*

THE expedients to which the unlicensed votaries of the histrionic art have been driven in order to evade the penalties inflicted by this Act, (12th of Anne), are well exemplified in the following play-bill, (the original is before us), which is curious in another point of view, as we here find the lady, who was destined to become the most distinguished tragic actress of her time, announced *prima donna* in the opera of "Love in a Village." There is considerable merit in the scheme of insinuating "polite literature" into the inhabitants of Wolverhampton, by the sale of an assortment of tooth powder at 2s, 1s, and 6d a paper.—*Jurist*, Vol. 1, p. 276.

"MR. KEMBLE,

With humble submission

(To the Ladies and Gentlemen of Wolverhampton, and the Town in general),  
proposes entertaining them

On *Wednesday* evening, the 8th instant, at the TOWN HALL,  
with a CONCERT

of

VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC,

Divided into three parts.

Between the several parts of THE CONCERT,  
(For the amusement of the TOWN, and the further improvement of POLITE  
LITERATURE,)

WILL BE CONTINUED

THE HISTRIONIC ACADEMY,

with specimens of

The various MODES OF ELOCUTION,

BY INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN,

\* See page 7.

(For their diversion),  
 Without fee, gain, hire, or reward.  
 The specimens of this night's amusement will be taken from  
 A COMIC OPERA, called

## LOVE IN A VILLAGE.

Sir William Meadows,	by	Mr. K-MB-LE,
Young Meadows,	by	Mrs. S-DD-NS,
Justice Woodcock,	by	Mr. B-RT-N,
Hawthorne,	by	Mr. C-RR-K,
Eustace,	by	Mr. D-L-NE,
Carter,	by	Mr. D-W-NG,
Countrymen at the Statue,		Mr. H-M-L-T N, Mr. N-A-L-K, &c.,
Hodge,	by	Mr. J-N-S,
Rosetta,	by	Miss K-MB-L-E,
Lucinda,	by	Mrs. H-M-LT-N,
Mrs. Deborah Woodcock,	by	Mrs. BU-CH-K,
Housemaid,	by	Miss F. K-MB-LE,
Cook,	by	Mrs. NA-L-K,
Madge,	by	Mrs. K-MB-LE.

And concluded with Comic Orations, &c.,  
 from  
 The FIDDLER turned CITIZEN.

\*.\* This is to assure the public that no money will be taken for admittance, nor will any Tickets be sold; therefore all persons inclined to attend the Concert, are desired to call at Mr. LATHAM's, at the Swan, where tickets will be delivered GRATIS to his friends and acquaintance.

N. B. Mr. LATHAM has a quantity of TOOTH-POWDER (from LONDON), which he intends selling in papers, at 2s, 1s, and 6d each. The same POWDERS may likewise be had at Mr. SMART's, and Mr. SMITH's Printing Office, and at the Talbot, in King street.

The Concert to begin at 5 o'clock, and the LECTURES exactly at half-past 6.

It is humbly hoped no Ladies or Gentlemen will take it amiss, that they can not possibly be admitted without a ticket."



## PLAY BILLS.

## PROVIDENCE THEATRE.

1812.

THE managers have the pleasure of announcing to the public that they have engaged

MR. COOKE

To perform in the Providence Theatre for six nights only. During the engagement no play can be repeated.

In order to prevent difficulty, and give an equal chance to the public in general to witness the brilliant performances of this justly celebrated actor, a box plan with the whole of the boxes regularly numbered will be opened at the Box office of the Theatre, at ten o'clock on each day of performance, when places may be taken in any number not exceeding ten, nor less than two.

*This Evening*, July 13th, (1812), will be presented for the only time this season, Shakspeare's celebrated comedy in five acts, called

## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.


Shylock, (for that night only,) - - -	Mr. COOKE.
of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London, (his first appearance here.)	
Antonio, - - - - -	Mr. Drake.
Gratiano, - - - - -	Mr. Waring.
Bassanio, - - - - -	Mr. Young.
Lorenzo, - - - - -	Mr. Robertson.
Duke, - - - - -	Mr. Clarke.
Launcelot, - - - - -	Mr. Dickenson.
Gobbo, - - - - -	Mr. Barnes.
Salanio, - - - - -	Mr. Roberts.
Salarino, - - - - -	Mr. Spiller.
Tubal, - - - - -	Mr. Entwistle.
Balthazar, - - - - -	Master A. Drake.
Portia, - - - - -	Mrs. Powell.
Nerissa, - - - - -	Mrs. Young.
Jessica, (her first appearance in Providence,) -	Miss Dellinger.

To which will be added a much admired Entertainment, never performed here, called


### PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT,

or THE PORTRAIT OF CERVANTES, as performed in London with the most unbounded applause.

Hernandez,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Drake.
Don Gaspard,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Roberts.
Don Leon,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Robertson.
Don Fernando,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Spiller.
Isidore,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Clarke.
Fabio,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Entwistle.
Pedrillo,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Dickenson.
Pachio,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Master A. Drake.
Donna Lorenza,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Dellinger.
Joanna,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Drake.
Beatrice,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Barnes.

 Tickets and places for the Boxes may be had of Mr. LYNDON, at the Theatre, on the days of performance, from 3 o'clock until the close of the entertainment.

Doors to be opened a quarter before seven, and the curtain to rise at a quarter before eight, precisely.

 On no account whatever, will the smoking of Cigars be permitted in any part of the theatre.

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## LION THEATRE,

### PROVIDENCE.

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THE managers respectfully inform the citizens of Providence that the theatre was opened TUESDAY, May 10th, (1836), with appropriate Scenery, Dresses, and Decorations. The interior of the building has undergone an entire alteration, which they trust will be to the satisfaction and comfort of the audience.

Stage Manager, Mr. Ingersoll—Acting Manager, Mr. Houpt—Artist, Mr. Schinotti—Leader of the Orchestra, J. Clemens.

The managers respectfully inform the public that the performance of last evening will be repeated this evening, May 11th.

The Evening's Entertainment to commence with the interesting Drama, entitled,

### THE WANDERING BOYS.

Paul,	}	Wandering Boys,	-	-	-	Mrs. Houpt.
Justin,			-	-	-	Mrs. Ingersoll.
Count de Croissey,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Houpt.	
Roland,	-	-	-	-	Verne.	

Lubin,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mestayer.
Gregorie,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Marshall.
Gaspard,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Curtis.
Hubert,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Wyatt.
Sentinel,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Smith.
Baroness,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. J. Mestayer.
Marceline,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. J. Mestayer.
Louise,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Harley.
<hr/>								
INDIAN WAR DANCE,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Schinotti.
COMIC SONG,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Mestayer.
FROG DANCE,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Master C. Mestayer.

The Evening's Entertainment to conclude with the Laughable Farce of

THE YOUNG WIDOW.

Manville, - - - - - Mr. Houpt.  
 Splash, (with a mock minuet), - - - - - Mr. Mestayer.

Messrs. Potter and Gould are engaged to preserve strict order ; and no smoking allowed.

Boxes, 75 cents. Pit, 37½ cents.

Doors open at 7 o'clock. Performance to commence at half past 7, precisely.

Box office open from 10 to 1 ; and from 3 to 5 P. M.

PROVIDENCE THEATRE.

The public are respectfully informed that this new and splendid Entertainment will be open for the season on

*This Evening, October 29, (1838),*

under the direction of MESSRS. MEADER and FLYNN, with a full and efficient Company ; which for talent and respectability is not to be surpassed.

In order to render the *Orchestra complete* an engagement has been entered into with the AMERICAN BRASS BAND, aided by artists of acknowledged talent from New York and Boston.

Leader of Orchestra, - - - - - Mr. Woods.

In addition to the talented Company engaged, Mr. GATES, the celebrated Comedian from the Bowery Theatre, New York ; Mr. FLYNN, and Mrs. MAEDER, (*formerly* Miss CLARA FISHER), will have the honor of making their appearance.

Director of the Music, - - - - - Mr. MAEDER,  
 who will preside at the Piano Forte.

*This Evening, October 29,*

will be performed Cherry's Comedy of the

## SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER.

Governor Heartall,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Nickerson.
FRANK HEARTALL,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. FLYNN.
Captain Woodley,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Fenno.
Young Malfort,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Jackson.
TIMOTHY QUAINT,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. GATES.
Ferrett,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. McDonald.
WIDOW CHEERLY,	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. MAEDER.
Mrs. Malfort,	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Rider.
Mrs. Fidget,	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Fletcher.
Susan,	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Lee.

Previous to the Comedy will be spoken by Mrs. Maeder,

## AN OPENING ADDRESS.

In the course of the evening the Orchestra will perform the celebrated overtures to "Masaniello" and "La Bayadere," composed by Auber.

The Entertainment to conclude with the new and popular farce

## A PLEASANT NEIGHBOR.

Sir George Howard,	-	-	-	-	Mr. Haynes.
CHRISTOPHER STRAP,	-	-	-	-	MR. GATES.
Thomas,	-	-	-	-	Mr. McDonald.
Lady Howard,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Matthews.
Nancy Strap,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Rider.

Price of admission,—Boxes, \$1; Pit, 50 cents; Gallery, 25 cents.

Private Boxes from \$5 to \$8 a night.

A few season tickets will be sold on early application at the Box Office.

Doors to open at 6 o'clock, and Curtain to rise at 7 precisely.

Tickets and places to be secured at the Box Office from 10 a. m. to 2 p. m.

An efficient police is engaged to preserve strict order.

A division in the gallery for colored persons.

## PROVIDENCE MUSEUM.

## WESTMINSTER STREET.

The proprietors have much pleasure in announcing to the citizens of Providence that the exhibition saloon of the new Museum is now completed, and that it will be opened on

*Monday Evening, Dec. 25, (1848.)*

They are resolved that the principles of the management will be such as to secure the patronage of a liberal and enlightened community.

The dramatic department will be under the direction of

MR. W. C. FORBES,

*late manager of the Charleston and Savannah Theatres.*

Admission to the saloon, 25 cents.

For the accommodation of parties seats can be secured during the day at the ticket office.

The doors will be open at half past 6 o'clock.

The overture will commence at 7 o'clock precisely; during which will be exhibited a magnificent

**DROP CURTAIN,**

painted by Mr. G. Curtis.

The saloon will be brilliantly lighted with gas from Almy's Gas Works.

*Monday Evening, Dec. 25,*

Will be performed Tobin's fashionable Comedy of the

**HONEY MOON.**

Duke Aranza,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. W. C. Forbes.
Rolando,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. A. Andrews.
Jaques, (the Mock Duke,)	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Cowell.
Juliana,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. W. C. Forbes.
Volante,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Kinlock.

A Pas de Deux by Miss E. and C. Emmons.

To conclude with the musical Farce of the

**TURNPIKE GATE.**

Crack,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Cowell.
Joe Standfast,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. A. Andrews.
Peggy,	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Carman.

**FORBES'S THEATRE.**

(NEW MUSEUM BUILDING.)

**GRAND OPENING NIGHT.**

*Commencement Jubilee. Splendid Entertainment. Unusual array of Talent.*

**Sheridan's Most Splendid Comedy.**

**New and Beautiful Scenery.**

W. C. Forbes most respectfully announces to the citizens of Providence and to the people of Rhode Island generally, that having, after his heavy losses by the late fire, and many subsequent discouragements, eventually succeeded in securing the erection of a new and spacious Theatre, he will have the honor of opening the same for public patronage on

*Wednesday Evening, September 6, 1854.*

It will be his constant study to present such a series of evening entertainments as will be in every respect acceptable to the people and worthy

of their patronage; and to this end he has engaged an unusually large and expensive company—a company which in point of strength and variety of talent, will compare most favorably with any of those in the largest cities; and which is, in truth, altogether superior to any hitherto employed out of those cities.

The manager has the pleasure of announcing the following names: Messrs. J. H. Oxley, John Dunn, J. D. Grace, E. Varrey, H. O. Pardey, Loveday, Read, Linden, McClannin, Bryant, Bishop, Miller, Murphy, and H. Pardey. Mesdames W. C. Forbes, H. L. Clark, H. P. Grattan and Miss Julia Miles, Miss Bryant, Miss Isabella Andrews, and Miss Munroe. Mons. and Madame Gilbert, Principal Dancers, from the Edinburg and Glasgow theatres. Herr Adolphe Reinicke, Leader of Orchestra; J. V. White, Scenic Artist; Jasper Davison, Machinist; W. A. Arnold, Treasurer.

The stage is furnished with entirely new and very elegant scenery, painted by the artist of the establishment, Mr. White, and comprises a very costly and

#### MAGNIFICENT ACT DROP.

The audience saloon is very commodious, and is conveniently divided into Boxes, Family Circle, (or second tier of Boxes), Parquet, and Gallery. There are also a few Private Boxes and Stage Boxes)—The Private Boxes being at each end of the Family Circle next the stage—The Proscenium Boxes (that is, those on the stage) are merely for the use of the performers.

The entrance to the Gallery is from the avenue on the west side. All other parts of the audience saloon are entered from Westminster street as far as the Box office on the second floor, where three diverging stairways lead to the Boxes, Parquet, and Family Circle, The stairways are all spacious and convenient.

*Wednesday Evening, September 6th, 1854,*

A highly diversified and splendid entertainment will be offered. The performances will commence with the Grand National Ode of

#### THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER,

which will be sung in chorus by the whole company.

This will be succeeded by the delivery of a

#### POETIC ADDRESS,

written for the occasion by a gentleman of this city.

After which will be presented Sheridan's Classic Comedy  
of the

#### SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL,

With a cast of characters equal to any that this celebrated play has hitherto received in this country.

Sir Peter Teazle,	-	-	-	-	Mr. W. C. Forbes.
Joseph Surface,	-	-	-	-	J. H. Oxley.
Charles Surface,	-	-	-	-	Grace.
Sir Oliver Surface,	-	-	-	-	Pardey.
Crabtree,	-	-	-	-	J. Dunn.
Sir Benjamin Backbite,	-	-	-	-	Loveday.
Careless,	-	-	-	-	Read.
Moses,	-	-	-	-	Linden.
Snake,	-	-	-	-	Bryant.
Rowley,	-	-	-	-	McClannin.
Trip,	-	-	-	-	Bishop.
William,	-	-	-	-	Miller.
John,	-	-	-	-	Herbert Pardey.
Lady Teazle,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. W. C. Forbes.
Mrs. Candour,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. H. L. Clark.
Lady Sneerwell,	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Gilbert.
Maria,	-	-	-	-	Miss Isabella Andrews.
Lucy,	-	-	-	-	Miss Munroe.

---

PAS DE DEUX, - - - - Mons. and M<sup>de</sup>. Gilbert.

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To conclude with the rich and very laughable Farce of .

#### MY PRECIOUS BETSEY.

Mr. Bobtail,	-	-	-	-	Mr. J. Dunn.
Wagtail,	-	-	-	-	Linden.
Langford,	-	-	-	-	Read.

(for the other characters see bills.)

Doors will be open at 7 o'clock. Performance will commence precisely at 7½ o'clock.

PRICES OF ADMISSION: Boxes, 37½ cts.; Stage Boxes, 50 cts.; Parquet and Family Circle, (or second tiers of Boxes,) each 25 cts.; Gallery, 13 cts. For seats reserved in the boxes, 12½ cts. extra will be charged. Private Boxes, \$5 each.

#### OLD THEATRE BILL.

The N. Y. *Clipper* recently published a sketch of Mr. Henry Lewis, who was formerly stage manager at the Dorrance-street Theatre. Mr. Lewis is the father of the well-known actress, Ettie Henderson. The bill offered at his benefit, Dec. 27, 1841, is as follows:

#### THEATRE,

#### GREATEST NOVELTY OF THE SEASON,

For the benefit of

MR. LEWIS, STAGE MANAGER,

who in announcing the above, begs most respectfully to return thanks for

past favors, and trusts that his exertions in the various productions of the season will insure him that support it will ever be his constant study to deserve.

*Monday Evening, December 27, 1841,*

will be presented, for the first time a drama of intense interest, performed in London for one entire season to densely crowded houses, entitled

### FIFTEEN YEARS OF A DRUNKARD'S LIFE.

Vernon,	- -	Mr. Williamson	Pounce,	- - - -	Jackson
Glanville,	- - - -	Gann	Butts,	- - - -	Murphy
Franklin,	- - - -	Locke	Thieves,	- - - -	Messrs. Reed, Marks, etc.
Dogrose,	- - - -	Kemble	Isabella,	- - - -	Mrs. Hantonville
Copswood,	- - - -	Lewis	Miss Vernon,	- - - -	Miss Burns
Jupiter,	- - - -	Harris	Alicia,	- - - -	Mrs. Russell
Wingbred,	- - - -	W. H. Russell	Patty,	- - - -	Mrs. Kemble
Picklock,	- - - -	Jones			

In act first

### A GRAND MASQUERADE.

Prudence,	- - - - -	Mrs. W. H. Russell
Temperance,	- - - - -	Miss Burns

### FANCY DANCE, LA PETITE BERTHA.

Comic Song—"Teetotal Society,"	- - - - -	Mr. Lewis
Song—"Rory O'Moore,"	- - - - -	Mrs. Hantonville
La Cracovienne, second time,	- - - - -	La Petite Bertha

To conclude with, for the first and only time, Mitchell's successful farce, performed at the Olympic Theatre, New York, seventy-three nights, entitled

### A LADY AND GENTLEMAN IN A PECULIARLY PERPLEXING PREDICAMENT.

A Gentleman, first appearance in that character,	- - - - -	Mr. Lewis
A Lady,	- - - - -	Mrs. Hantonville
Landlady,	- - - - -	Mrs. Kemble
A Voice,	- - - - - by - - - -	A Voice
A Coat Sleeve,	- - - - - by - - - -	A Sleeve of a Coat
A Dog,	- - - - - by The greatest Puppy in Providence	

Private Boxes, each seat \$1, may be taken by parties of five or upwards. Dress Circle, 75 cts. Second Tier or Family Circle, 50 cts. Pit, 37½ cts. Gallery for colored persons, 25 cts.

Doors open at half-past 6 precisely, and performances will commence at 7.

The box-office will be open daily from 10 till 1, and 2 to 4 o'clock, where private boxes, tickets and places may be taken of Mr. Foster.



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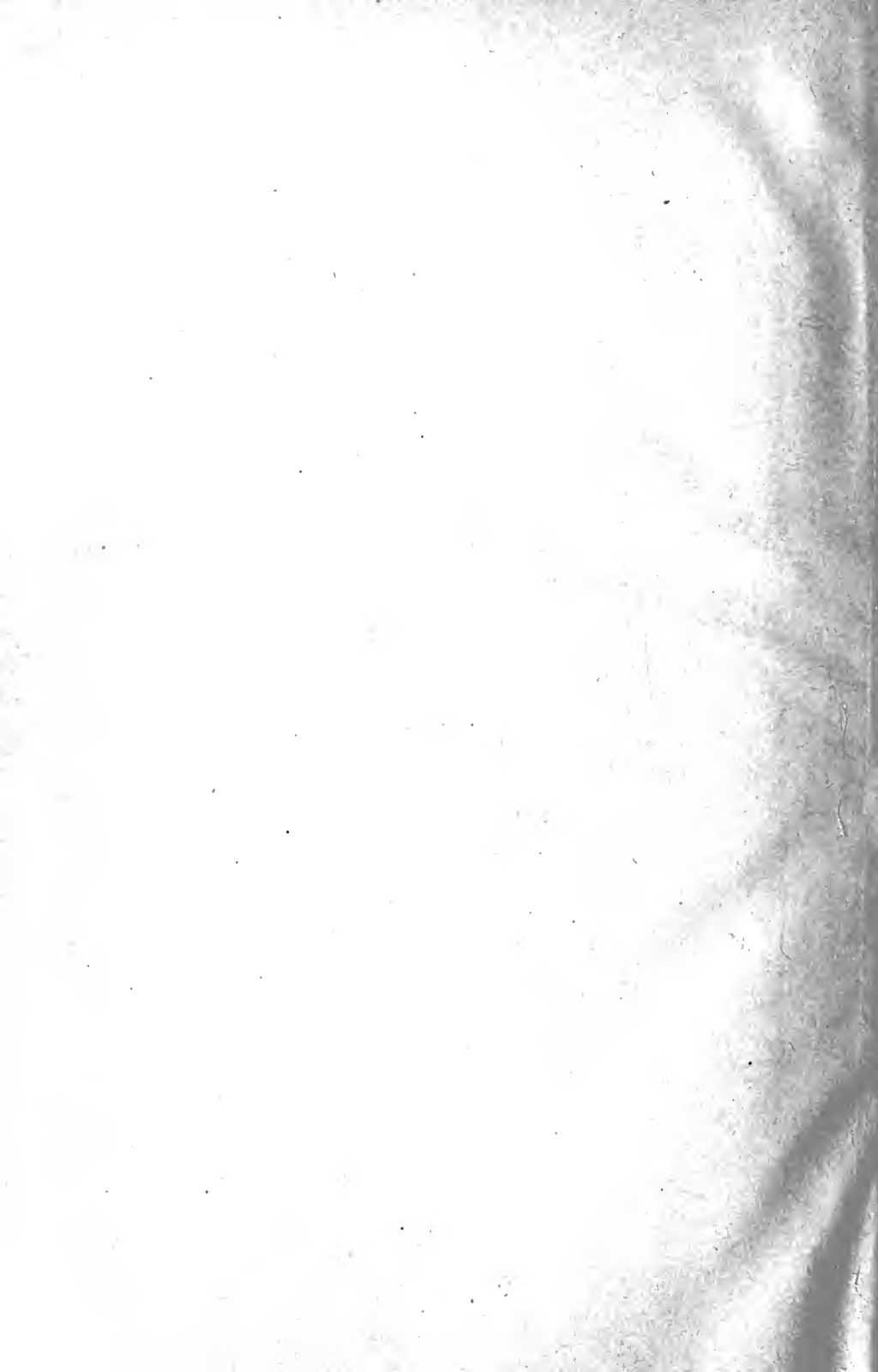
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